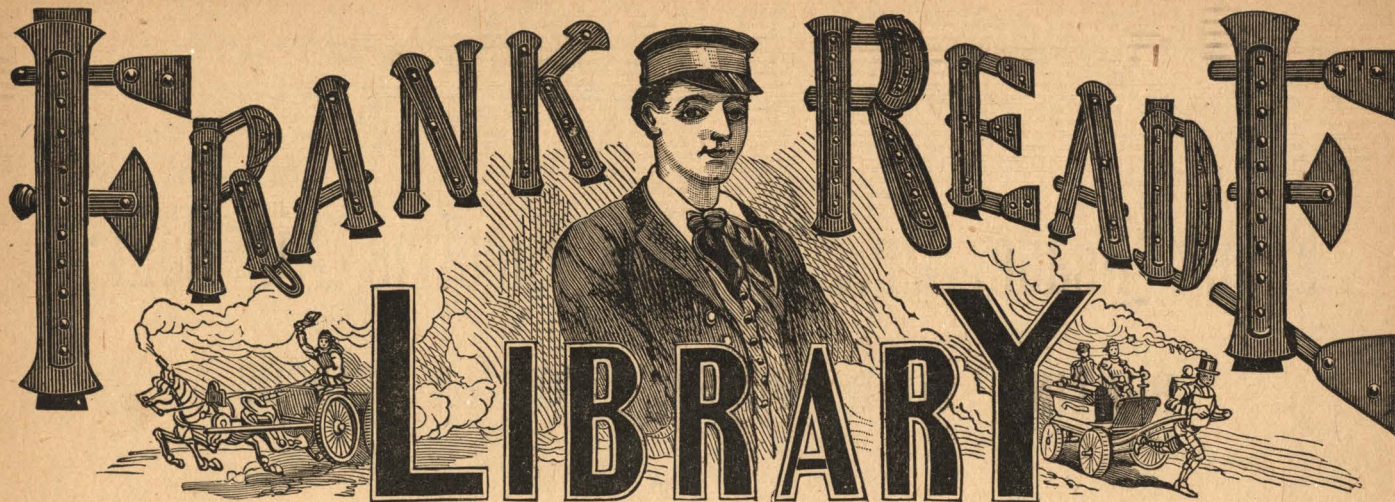


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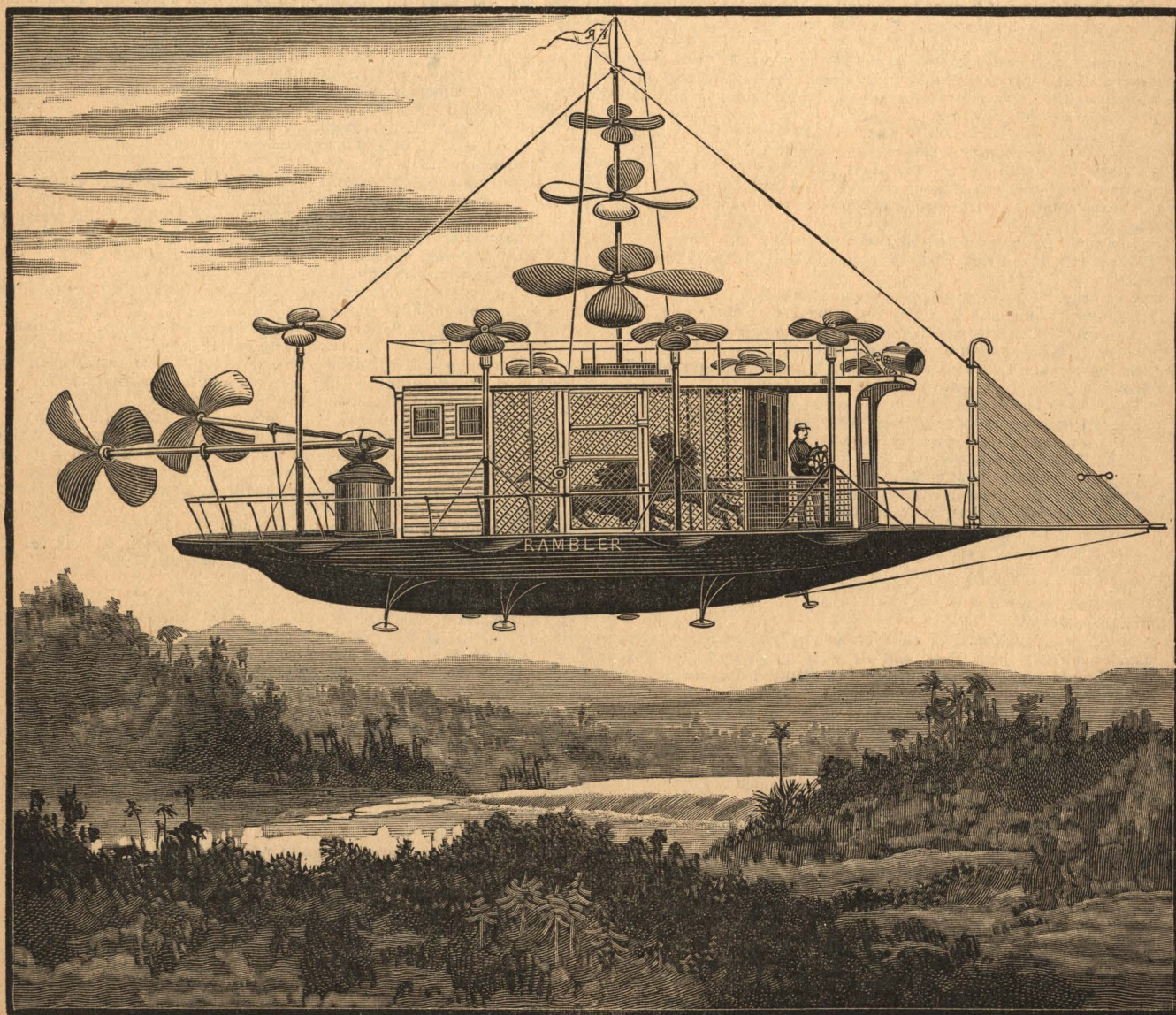
**Vol. III**

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**Frank Reade, Jr.,**

**AND HIS ELECTRIC AIR-BOAT; or,  
HUNTING WILD BEASTS FOR A CIRCUS.**

By "NONAME."





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# Frank Reade, Jr., and His Electric Air-Boat;

## OR, HUNTING WILD BEASTS FOR A CIRCUS.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "Frank Reade, Jr., With His Air Ship in Asia," "Frank Reade, Jr., in the Far West," etc., etc.

### CHAPTER I. THE AGREEMENT.

A GREAT circus had opened in the beautiful city of Readestown and on the following day the veteran showman who owned it made his way to the handsomest house in the place.

This mansion was owned by a famous young inventor named Frank Reade, Jr., and he proceeded to the reception-room where his distinguished caller was awaiting him.

Frank was a dashing looking young man, with a dark mustache, an intellectual cast of features and a fine, athletic figure.

He had made himself famous by inventing the most marvelous electrical contrivances for navigating under water, over the land, and through the air.

The great circus manager was a person who spent vast sums of money purchasing curiosities for his show, and having read in the newspapers that Frank had built an electric air-boat, he had called to negotiate a purchase of it.

His card had been carried to Frank, so that when the young inventor entered the room he knew who his caller was.

Shaking hands with the circus owner, he asked:

"May I ask the object of your call, Mr. Barnum?"

"I have come to offer you \$50,000 for your new air-boat, Mr. Reade."

"You could not have it for ten times that sum."

"Why not? It did not cost as much to build it," said the circus owner.

"Very true. But my inventions are not for sale."

"I am very anxious to add it to my collection of curiosities."

"No doubt, but I have another purpose for the air-boat."

"Indeed! What do you intend to do with it?"

"Make a voyage to Africa to hunt wild beasts for amusement."

"By jingo, that gives me a good idea, Mr. Reade."

"To what do you allude, sir?"

"Could I induce you to hunt these wild beasts for me?"

"Do you mean to stock your menagerie?"

"Yes. That's exactly the plan."

"Capture the animals alive?"

"Precisely. Put them in a ship, and send them to this country."

"I might as well do that, as to kill the beasts outright."

"Such work as I propose would be very dangerous."

"That's just what I like."

"Will you do it for me?"

"Yes."

"When will you start?"

"In three days."

"Excellent! Excellent! I shall cable my London agent at once to charter the ship Black Bass, and dispatch her down to the African coast to Lagos, and there remain at your disposal for the shipment of any wild beasts you may capture."

"That will just suit," said Frank. "Now, let us arrange the details, and I will then show you my new air-boat."

"I did see her, when you made your trial ascension yesterday."

"Then you observed how perfectly she navigated the air?"

"Yes. On the strength of it I made you my offer to buy her."

At this juncture there came a bang at the door.

It flew open, and in dove a diminutive darky, with thick lips, a big flat nose, and a comical expression of countenance.

He was propelled forward by a terrific kick from behind, and landed in a heap in the middle of the floor.

His name was Pomp.

A faithful friend and servitor of Frank, he had always been one of the party on the trips the inventor made in his marvels.

"Bress de Lawd!" he gasped, scrambling to his big feet. "I see ebber so much oblige' fo' dat kick, honey. Gimme anudder one! Gimme anudder one, won't yo'? Gosh amighty, I see jest itchin' fo' ter hab yo' kick de stuffins out ob my pants. Come on, Bahney, do, chile?"

Unaware that any one was in the room, the coon stuck his fingers up to his nose while facing the open doorway, and wriggled them at somebody who was out in the hall.

"Be heavens!" roared the individual outside, in tones of intense rage, "if I had ther use av me bands I'd garrote ye."

"Yo?" contemptuously roared the darky, who was trying to lure the other into the room. "Why, yo' ole monkey-faced chimpanzee, yo' couldn't kill a fly unless yo' muzzle it first! Yah, yah, yah!"

"It's more than me hot Eyetalian blood kin stand!" roared the man outside, in exasperated tones. "Ter think av me, an O'Shea, ter take such lip from that liver-colored chromo of brutality! Bad cess ter yer sowl, I'll thramp yez as I would a worrum, aven if me hands bes toied behoid me back. Whoop! Be af!"

And in he pranced.

He was a red-headed, freckled-faced, raw-boned Irishman.

His name was Barney, and, like the coon, he lived with Frank, traveled with him, and was as bold and brave as a lion.

The coon had lassoed him in the yard.

Binding his arms so he could not use them, Pomp began to shoot putty balls at him, until Barney chased him into the house with the result mentioned.

As soon as the Celt danced into the room, the coon rushed past him, closed and locked the door, and roared:

"Now I see got yo' whar no one kin interfere, an' I see gwine ter shave all de hair off ob yo' head!"

"Why, begorra, you—ha! Howly floy—it's Masther Frank!"

He had just caught sight of the inventor and his guest.

Pomp's jaw dropped, and he shrunk back abashed at the exhibition he had made before the stranger.

"Here—here!" exclaimed the young inventor, angrily. "This is a nice prank for you two big boobies to cut up."

The Irishman and the coon glanced sheepishly at each other, and then eyed Frank without saying a word, and he continued:

"I'd like to know what you mean by this caper?"

"Specs we didn't know da: you were in heah, sah," said Pomp.

"It's a ruction yer spillin'," said Barney. "Ther nagur war afther makin' a steer av me an' lured me in here ter bate me wid a chair. Had yez not caught us, bedad, it's but wan lung he'd be afther havin'. The other wan would have been kicked from ther buzzom av his corporation clane troo ther cellin'."

Frank could not refrain from laughing.

The circus owner was roaring at the comical aspect of the two.

As soon as they recovered the young inventor said:

"Pomp, set Barney free."

"Yes, sah," said the coon, obeying.

"Faith, I'll poolverate the spalpeen now!" threatened the Celt, as he doubled up his fists, squared off and danced around the coon.

"Hold on, thar! Stop your nonsense!"

"Axcuse me," said Barney, sobering down at once.

"I've got some news for you."

"Wha' am dat, Marse Frank?" asked Pomp, curiously.

Frank introduced them to Mr. Barnum.

Then he said:

"You know we finished building the new electric air-boat?"

"Foive days ago," assented Barney.

"An' done gib her a trial trip yistiddy," added Pomp.

"She worked properly."

"Foine as silk," said Barney.

"And to-day we agreed to go to Africa in her."

"Yassah," assented Pomp. "Gwine huntin' fo' wild animiles."

"Well, boys, our plan shall be to capture them alive."

"Mother av Moses! Aloive, is it?" gasped Barney.

"Yes. We will collect a ship load and send them to this country."

"Is it ther loikes av a zoological gardin yer goin' ter shtart, or will yez open a museum?" queried Barney.

"They will be exhibited in Mr. Barnum's circus."

Both the coon and the Celt now understood the programme.



The idea was so novel it pleased them very much.

"The game will be excessively perilous," said Frank, "but if your constitutions have not changed recently, I think you will both agree with me that the more danger there is, the better you will like the work. Ain't I right?"

"It's a moind-reader yez are," said Barney, with a nod.

"Clar ter glory, I'se jest crazy ter go," declared Pomp.

"Then it's agreed," said Frank. "No obstacle remains now, Mr. Barnum. We shall do the work for you."

"Good!" said the delighted circus man. "And now to arrange the details. I will pay \$500 to \$1,000 for every individual wild beast you catch of which I will give you a list. And, gentlemen, by the time you finish, you can easily win a compensation of \$40,000 to \$60,000."

Here was a grand incentive.

They laid their plans according to Mr. Barnum's design.

After that the circus owner took his departure.

The three then discussed the matter awhile, and finally went out to the enormous shops of the famous inventor.

These buildings covered a large tract of ground, and in one of them having a sliding roof they found the air-boat.

She stood in the middle of the big room when they entered, and was a most singular craft in appearance.

But they scarcely had time to notice her, when they heard a tremendous crashing on the deck.

Glancing in the direction of the sound, they were very much startled to observe a man on the boat, armed with a long-handled sledge with which he was deliberately smashing her to pieces.

A cry of dismay escaped them.

Frank was rendered frantic.

He drew a revolver and aimed at the stranger.

"Madman!" he shouted. "Stop that, or I'll kill you!"

The stranger paused, started, turned deathly pale, and glancing around he fastened a startled glance upon the three.

"Caught!" he gasped in alarm.

## CHAPTER II.

### SHADRACH, THE LION TAMER.

THE Rambler, as the air boat was named, was made of aluminum. The forward part of the deck house was a pilot-room, the midship section a huge cage, and the after part an engine room.

On each side were four uprights with four bladed screws at the apex, on the deck house was another with three larger screws and all were arranged to lift the boat in the air.

At the stern two shafts projected with big driving wheels at the end braced by a cylindrical pedestal.

The air-rudder was fixed at the bow, a searchlight stood on the pilot room, and the boat rested upon a number of flanges.

Several of the uprights had been broken by the stranger and he was about to attack the deck house when Frank stopped him.

The inventor saw that he was a dark-faced fellow, with a heavy mop of black hair, a big nose, glaring eyes and a short, bristling black beard, while his thin, wiry body was clad in old, cheap clothing.

"Drop that sledge!" the inventor shouted at him.

"Yes—yes! Gosh, don't fire!" yelled the man in frightened tones.

"Now, come down here and give an account of yourself."

"All right! All right!" gasped the stranger, hastily obeying.

Barney and Pomp seized him the moment he landed.

The rascal saw that Frank would not hesitate to fire upon him if he revolted, for he was trespassing and creating the most malicious mischief.

"Why was you destroying this boat?" demanded Frank.

The man maintained a sullen silence.

"Speak!" exclaimed the inventor, angrily.

"I won't tell you," was the grim reply.

"What harm have I ever done you?"

"None," replied the man, quickly.

"Then why are you injuring me this way?"

"I'll tell you this much: I did it out of revenge to another."

Frank was perplexed and astonished by this reply.

He could not comprehend how he could be made to suffer for the injury some unknown person had done to this man.

"Since you won't confess to me," said he at length, "I'll find out your motive by putting you in prison."

A deathly pallor overspread the man's face.

He darted a quick, frightened glance at Frank, and gasped:

"Don't put me in jail!"

"I intend to punish you for your crime."

"Good heavens, spare me—have pity on me!"

"No, sir! You are a dangerous man to let roam at large."

"Oh, what a fool I was to do this mad act!"

He seemed to be so overcome with remorse that Frank began to relent, and thought of permitting him to go his way.

Before he could carry out his good intention, the man underwent a sudden revulsion of feeling.

With a black scowl upon his face, he began to rave and swear horribly at his captors.

He showed a demoniacal nature.

It disgusted Frank and his friends.

"You wait!" the man yelled savagely. "The time will come when I'll get free again. My first care will be to come back here and kill you—every one of you!"

Then he burst into another furious torrent of abuse against them, and used such horrible language that they fairly shuddered.

"Take him away to the police station," cried Frank.

"If I had a bung," said Barney, "be heavens I'd jam it in his throat!"

"Come on yo' loafer!" roared Pomp. "If yo' doan' I'se gwine ter slug yer!"

They dragged the villain out of the shop.

Then they started off for police headquarters with him.

After they were gone, a man came running toward Frank from the street, looking very much excited.

He was a perfect giant in size, and a veritable Hercules in strength, and his mustache and hair were of a brick red color.

He wore a slouched hat, a suit of gray corduroy, and had a pair of eyes that few men could encounter without finching.

Pausing near Frank he exclaimed breathlessly:

"Say! Did you see a shabby-looking gent around these premises? He was a thin, wiry fellow, with a mop of black hair, a bristly beard, he had a big nose, wild eyes, and a very dark complexion."

"Yes," answered Frank; "a fellow answering your description was in here a few moments ago smashing a new flying machine I just built. I sent him to jail."

"Thunderation! Then I've arrived too late. He was Sim Nixon, who was connected with Barnum's show. Had a quarrel with the boss to-day, and got so abusive he was kicked out. I heard him say he was coming here to smash the flying machine, so Barnum could not get it and do him out of the work he's been accustomed to. I presume you are Frank Reade, Jr., the inventor?"

"Yes," assented Frank. "And you?"

"Me? Oh, I am Shadrach, the lion-tamer. You see, Nixon was employed to procure animals for the menagerie. He was such an ugly cuss Barnum only kept him because he needed him. But as the boss told him he was going to buy your air-boat to do the work, and would need him no longer, he got cranky. Never expected he'd get fired. Thought they couldn't do without him. Had a bad case of swelled head."

"Then he came here to destroy my air-ship so Barnum could not use it, and would be compelled to retain his services?"

"You've struck it. When he made the threat and went out, I was in costume practicing with the animals. I had to change my rig before I could get here to warn you to look out for him."

"How did he know Barnum was going to try to get the air-boat?"

"The boss was telling the manager before Nixon, so as to take the conceit out of him."

"Well, he started in to do the work, but before he had entirely ruined her we caught him," said Frank. "He would not admit what his object was, but now I understand the motive, and I'm obliged for the trouble you put yourself to for me."

"Don't mention it," replied Shadrach, in an off-hand way. "I'm sorry I didn't get here in time. Are you going to get me a lion?"

"A pair of them are mentioned in the list."

"Good enough. How I wish I was going with you. I have no animals worth performing with now. Our lion died of old age a week ago. Since then my work don't amount to anything."

"I'll take you along if you wish to go."

"You will?" cried the lion-tamer, delightedly. "This is blind luck. I'll take up that offer. I heard Barnum say you were going to Africa to hunt for wild beasts for him. I'm an old animal trapper myself. Once I was in Central Africa; I caught more animals than any other man the boss ever sent out. Besides that I can speak the lingo of several of the native tribes."

"Then you'll be just the man we want with us," said Frank, realizing what a valuable acquisition Shadrach could be. "We are to get \$500 to \$1,000 for every animal we catch. There are thirty pairs of animals wanted. That means \$40,000 to 60,000 for me. If you join my crew there will be four in the party. Each one will receive \$10,000 to \$15,000, for I'll equally divide the profit."

"Thunderation! It's a go! That beats twenty-five dollars per week salary all to pieces. I'll join you. Let me go back to the circus and tell Barnum. He'd be glad to have me go, for he knows very well I'm a veteran in this business who has had a great experience that could be turned to his account."

"Here come Barney and Pomp back."

"Who are they?"

"My two friends. They are going with me."

Both the coon and the Irishman looked worried.

When they reached Frank, the Celt cried bitterly:

"The spalpeen escaped from us!"

"Heavens! Is that so?" cried Frank, in alarm.

"He did. Tearin' himself free av our grip whin near ther station, he jumped into a doctor's buggy an' driv away. We follied. But he bate us to ther railroad deppo. A thrain war just stamin' out. He wint aboard, an' begorra, we arruv only jist in toime ter see ther back av his neck a moile away."

"Did you inform the police?"

"Faix, we did that, but it's no good it will do."

Frank was very much disgusted.

He introduced his friends to Shadrach.

Then he explained all that the lion tamer said.

Shadrach then went back to the circus, and our friends returned to the shop to examine the damage Nixon did.

It would occupy several days to repair it, but they were glad it was no worse, and carried away the wreckage.



On the following day the circus left town, and Shadrach remained behind to accompany Frank on his air trip.

Work was begun upon the Rambler.

New uprights were substituted for the broken ones, supplies of various kinds were stowed away in the rooms in the hull, and at the expiration of a week the air boat was ready to depart.

Frank and his companions had all their business affairs properly settled, and went to the shop one afternoon.

The sliding roof was removed.

Boarding the Rambler, the young inventor entered the wheel-room, in which were the levers for controlling the machine.

Pulling one of them, he put the electric current from a series of storage batteries in connection with a motor that operated the machinery to which the upright screws were geared.

A tremendous buzzing of the air followed, and the air-boat soared up through the roof to the sky.

Every one in the streets of Readestown caught sight of the ascending machine.

A tremendous cheer greeted her crew.

Our friends waved their hats to the admiring spectators as the Rambler continued to go upward.

Cheer after cheer continued to emanate from the crowd, but soon the rapid flight upward of the air-boat plunged her into a dense cloud, and she faded from view, Barney playing a lively reel on a fiddle, and Pomp accompanying him with a banjo.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE STORM IN THE SKY.

"GREAT Heaven, Barney, put on every volt the batteries can generate for the driving screws, or we are dead men!"

This cry pealed from Frank's lips a week later.

High in the heavens the air-boat was speeding along, and back of her there came a black cloud, from which great streaks of lightning were flashing incessantly.

Propelled by the high wind, the cloud was making at least eighty miles an hour in that high current.

The Rambler was riding in its way.

Barney pulled the lever all the way over, and the big driving wheels flew around swiftly.

Ahead darted the boat at a furious pace.

She had risen to a height of 12,000 feet to get above a storm that was raging furiously beneath her.

It was frightfully cold.

To ascend higher meant a temperature of many degrees below zero, while if she went down, she would plunge into the storm.

Consequently Frank preferred to try to race the fierce electric cloud that was flying after her.

It was a terrific race.

Above the declining sun threw a yellow tint through the hazy atmosphere, and a dull gloom prevailed.

Upon earth it was already night.

The tops of the storm clouds under the flying machine looked like the rolling billows of a smoky ocean.

Occasionally an appalling thunder clap roared out like the booming of artillery on the battlefield.

Lurid flashes of lightning tore through the cloud banks, sending a crimson glare into the surrounding space.

Terrible as the storm below was, it seemed feeble by contrast with the pursuing cloud.

This monster was hundreds of feet thick, as black as ink, and remained in a most singular shape.

Almost incessant streaks of electric fire flew out of its edges, and whizzed through the atmosphere to a great distance.

It came rolling and swaying along in hot pursuit of the air-boat, reaching out its devastating zig-zag streaks of fire toward her, as if eager to strike the Rambler.

This bristly demon of the air was saturated with electricity, and despite the utmost efforts of the Rambler, seemed to gain on her.

Frank watched it nervously.

He realized that once the boat was in close proximity to the cloud, their lives would be very much endangered.

Rushing into the wheel-room, he glanced at the registers.

The air-boat was speeding along at the rate of a mile a minute, with the current of air she was in.

Her screws were whirling just fast enough to hold her suspended at a height of 12,000 feet above the Atlantic, and her course was due southeast.

"Barney, raise her up higher! We can't escape the cloud!" he cried.

"But, begorra, we'll frooze," objected the Celt.

"It can't be helped. Try it!"

Barney groaned, and pulling one of the levers he increased the speed of revolutions made by the screws.

Up mounted the Rambler, obeying the impulse, but it soon became apparent that she could not avoid her pursuer that way as the cloud seemed to follow the draught she created.

"The air-ship shot upward until she was 26,400 feet above the sea, and a thick, hoar frost settled all over her.

"Five miles up!" muttered Frank, looking at a gauge.

He glanced out the door.

The gloom had intensified, and the cold was so bitter that had they not been warmly clad, they would have frozen.

Still pursuing them came the cloud.

By this time it was only half a mile astern.

A look of despair crossed Frank's face.

"Have we left it?" gasped Barney, who was shivering and shaking with the awful cold.

"No. Let her drop down into the storm—quick!"

Barney slackened the speed of the screws and the boat began to gravitate toward the sea again.

Down, down she sunk, every foot increasing the temperature, and Frank glanced out the window.

The cloud clung to their track.

As he looked an awful flash of forked lightning with many branches flew toward the boat.

The next instant she was surrounded by the terrible fire.

It affected her electric apparatus as if it were paralyzed.

The machinery seemed to stop.

A sickening downward plunge of the boat followed.

She seemed to have lost all her power.

"Heavens!" gasped Frank, clapping his hand to his eyes.

He imagined that the crisis had come.

A dense gloom instantly followed the appalling flash and the swift descent of the boat increased.

It made the brains of the crew fairly swim.

Then there came a sudden shock.

The buzzing was heard.

Again the screws were whirling.

Her power had returned as abruptly as it left her and the speed of her descent became modified.

She soon reached the billowy storm clouds, but by that time was hanging by her screws in space once more.

Her downward rush had brought the electrified clouds plunging along after her, and she went through the storm as if she were be-fogged.

Just as she came out of the storm clouds in a heavy downpour of rain the electrified cloud reached the storm.

The conjunction of the two clouds created the most terrific thunder clap that ever shook the sea.

Thousands of electric streaks and sparks flew in every direction about the Rambler.

She swayed as if she had been struck by a cyclone.

She sped of her descent increased, causing Barney to make the screws whirl faster.

It was intensely dark where she then floated, and the Celt turned the electric current into the search-light.

A tremendous glare shot downward.

It fell upon the ocean only 500 feet below.

Instantly the Irishman increased the speed of the screws, and the descent of the machine was checked.

She fell no further, but maintaining her present altitude rushed along under the propulsion of her stern screws.

"Safe!" gasped Frank.

He knew they were all right now.

"How about that cloud, sor?" asked Barney.

"It went to pieces among the storm clouds."

"Thanks ter St. Patherick fer that!"

"Where's Pomp and Shadrach?"

"Faith they wor down below in ther cabin."

"Queer we haven't heard anything of them."

"Sure somethin' may have happened thim."

"I'll go down and see."

Frank descended a companionway in a corner of the room and found himself in a small cabin in the forward section of the boat.

It contained a number of bunks.

Seeing nothing of the two in question, he passed into the combined dining-room and kitchen but failed to see them there.

The room back of this was a store-room and abaft of it a compartment wherein the electric machinery stood.

A number of rods, wheels and wires covered the ceiling, the walls were made into receptacles for storage batteries, and in the middle of the room stood three machines.

One was an electric lighting engine for the incandescent lamps, with which each room was fitted, the other was a small oil engine for operating a powerful dynamo by means of which the batteries were charged.

The electric motors governing the screw shafts and driving wheels were up in the sternmost compartment.

Upon the floor of this room lay Pomp and Shadrach flat on their backs, to all appearances dead.

A cry of horror escaped Frank.

He rushed up to them and knelt down.

To his relief he found them both faintly breathing.

"Some dreadful accident has occurred to them!" he muttered.

But what it was he could not imagine.

He procured some liquor and set to work reviving them.

It was a difficult task.

But finally he succeeded.

The giant lion tamer was the first to recover.

"Thunderation!" he gasped, "what a shock!"

"What ails you?" demanded Frank.

"Hang me if I know. When we were high up in the air it seemed as if a million streaks of lightning flew off the machinery. When it hit me, I felt as if I had taken hold of an electric battery. It knocked me flat as a flounder."

"And Pomp got the same shock, I presume."

"Yes. Say, that was a scorcher, wasn't it?"

"It must have happened when the lightning struck the boat."



"Fo' de Lawd sake, gimme an ax?" said Pomp, just then.  
 "What for?" asked Frank.  
 "I've gwine ter kill Barney fo' playin' dat electric joke on me."  
 "He didn't do it. The lightning struck us."  
 "Golly! I done fink it wuz a joke."

Just then Frank heard Barney yell through a speaking tube:  
 "Masther Frank! Come up here! Quick!"  
 There was an inflection to his tones showing that something serious had transpired.  
 Wondering what it was, Frank rushed up-stairs to the pilot-house and joined the Irishman.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE KING OF THE FOREST.

"WHAT'S the matter, Barney?"

"Be Heavens there's a ship bein' dhrriv ashore on ther rocks be ther storm!" cried the Irishman, pointing out the window.  
 The search-light was blazing down upon the ocean, and Frank saw the waves running very high.

A fierce gale was blowing from the northwest, and torrents of rain poured from the sky.

Below the Rambler was a frowning coast, the water boiling over the outlying rocks furiously.

A ship was caught in the storm,  
 She had made terrible leeway, as it was a difficult matter to beat away from the coast against storm and tide, although she had a stay-sail up forward, and a balance-reefed spanker aft.

It was clear enough to Frank that she could not make any headway, and as she was dangerously close to the shore, she was bound to go upon it.

"That must be the coast of Africa!" he exclaimed.

"Faith, it's a garn case, that ship is, entoirely!"

"Hold on! She is not on the rocks yet!"

"What do you mean be that?"

"Hold the Rambler where she is, and you'll see."

Barney stopped the air-boat.

Running out on deck, Frank loosened the anchor line.

As soon as the grapnel was free, he guided it to fall upon the deck of the plunging vessel, and shouted:

"Ship ahoy! Ship ahoy!"

"A-hoy!" came the faint reply.

"Make that line fast to your craft!"

"Ay, ay!"

He could see the sailors securing the rope.

It was fastened to the capstan, and as soon as it held, Frank saw that the other end was secured to the stern of the Rambler, and then shouted to Barney:

"Head for the west!"

"West it bes!" cheerily answered the Irishman.

Away ran the flying machine, and the line was pulled taut when the bow of the ship was hauled around.

It was a hard tug.

But she slowly began to forge ahead.

Gradually she was pulled away from the dangerous shore by the gallant air-boat, until at last she had a safe offing.

The Rambler went straight in the teeth of the gale, never faltering an inch, her big rudder carrying her in any direction Barney turned it.

"There! She has plenty sea room now," Frank muttered.

"Ahoj there!" came a cry from the ship.

"Well?" demanded Frank, at the top of his voice, for the lashing and booming of the waves, coupled with the shrieking of the wind through the rigging, raised a fearful din.

"We are safe enough now, thanks to you."

"Good! What craft is that?"

"The ship Black Bess, bound for Lagos."

"In the employ of Mr. Barnum?"

"Ay, ay. How did you know?"

"Because this is the air-boat which will supply you with the animals you are to take back to America?"

"Just what we suspected."

"Cast off the hawsers and we will follow you to port."

This order was obeyed.

Conversation was difficult in the tumult of the elements.

Frank hauled up the hawser, and securing the grapnel, he returned to the pilot-house.

Pomp and Shadrach were in there explaining to Barney what had happened to them in the engine-room.

When Frank told them what vessel it was they had saved from wreckage, their astonishment knew no bounds.

The search-light was kept reflected down upon the ship, and they saw her run for the Gulf of Guinea.

She had a hard time of it that night, but passing the grain, ivory, gold and slave coasts on the following day she finally reached her destination.

It was an island on the coast of Sokoto, with a good harbor and was connected with the main by several smaller isles.

When she finally came to anchor, the air-ship descended until it fell in the sea beside her, and Frank boarded the vessel.

He met the captain and a lively conversation ensued about their business, at the end of which their plans were all arranged.

Returning aboard the air-boat, Frank found that Pomp had cook-

ed a good dinner on his electrically heated range and while dining told his companions what he said and did.

"There are sixty strong metal cages aboard the Black Bass," said he, "and as soon as we catch the animals we are seeking we will bring them to the ship and put them aboard."

"Have you got a list of the critters?" asked Shadrach.

"Yes," replied Frank, producing a paper, "here it is. Listen and I'll read off the names: Gorilla, hyena, jackal, lions, leopard, civet cat, white-tailed gnu, zebra, onager, dromedary, buffalo, giraffe, ibex goat, porcupine, ostrich, chameleon, crocodile, hippopotamus, elephant, rhinoceros, and ten minor animals. If we can get a pair or the young of any of them we are expected to take them."

"Doan' see how yo' gwine to carry all ob dem yer critters at once in dis yere ship," said Pomp. "De fact am dat if yo' was fo' ter put a elephant aboard she wouldn't fly—no sah!"

"Capture them one by one," laughed Frank. "Small ones two by two."

"Is it in ther ordher named yez will tackle thim?"

"As nearly as I can make out," replied the young inventor, smilingly. "I'll tackle them as I find them. A fellow can't be too choice upon that point where he might have to spend a week trying to get a certain animal, and in the end lose it."

As soon as the meal was finished they overhauled the machinery of the Rambler, and putting her in first class condition, they raised her in the air and sent her inland.

It was a most peculiar country.

After passing the sandy and rocky coast, the Rambler went over a grassy country, thickly speckled with calabashes.

Square native houses were seen in places, about which the naked savages indolently lounged.

As the grass lands were left behind, they came upon a dense, thorny jungle, based upon a sandy red soil.

The sun was declining in the west, and Pomp was posted on lookout, while Frank held the steering wheel.

On both sides the horizon was bounded by lumpy, outlying hills.

In half an hour a kraal was reached—a patch of yellow grass, offering a clearing in the thorny thicket.

Further on to the north over a ruddy plain lay scattered heaps of gray granite boulders, surrounded by tufts of bleached white grass.

The copse exhibited various hues, calabashes purple, and burnished by the sun and rain, thorns of a greenish, coppery bronze, dead trees with ghostly white trunks, and yellow stubble patches.

Frank headed for a large, dense forest.

As the Rambler flew over the trees at a height of less than one hundred feet, he could see that the woods were inhabited by numerous gaudy sun-birds, lamprotornis, bee eaters and parrots.

In the waters of the streams floated the huge, log-like bodies of crocodiles, while in the swamps were large secretary birds, that preyed upon serpents and other reptiles.

For the most part the woods was made up of olive, orange and date palm trees, evergreen oaks, cork trees and sea pines, intermixed with cypresses, myrtles, arbutus and fragrant heaths.

Wild plantations of sugar cane were seen in the glens and glades, and Frank headed for one of them.

"The gorillas usually are found among the cane," he remarked, "and we may as well examine this place as any other."

He let the Rambler descend in a clearing in the woods near the canebrake, and she landed upon her flanges.

Shadrach alighted with him.

"If there's any sign of gorillas around here," said he, "I'll soon find it. I know all about their habits."

He went off among the trees with Frank, and kept his keen glance roving about continually.

When they reached the margin of the woods he paused.

"See anything?" asked Frank.

"Look at those saplings," replied Shadrach.

The trees he pointed at were from four to six inches in diameter, had been broken, and bore the marks of gorillas' canine teeth, that penetrated to the heart of the trees to extract the pith.

It was an astonishing proof of the enormous strength of these terrible beasts, and showed that they had been there.

A crackling of branches reached Frank's ears.

"What's that?" he muttered.

"Hush! Draw your revolver!" whispered the lion tamer.

They fastened their glances upon the jungle of cane which was swayed rapidly just ahead of them.

In a moment more it parted right and left and out of it rushed a male gorilla on all fours.

The moment he saw the hunters he erected himself and looked them boldly in the face.

Standing fifteen yards distant the brute was a picture.

He stood six feet tall, had a huge body, wide chest, enormous muscular arms, fiercely glaring, large, deep gray eyes and a most hideous expression upon his face.

He pounded his breast with his huge fists till it sounded like a bass-drum and gave a sharp bark that glided into a deep roar, which sounded exactly like heavy thunder.

It was an appalling mode of defiance.

As Frank glanced at this king of the African forests it did not seem possible to capture it alive.

Yet such was his intention.

The gorilla advanced toward the two hunters fearlessly and let out roar after roar as it approached.



## CHAPTER V.

## A NIGHT ATTACK.

ONE blow from the paw of that savage beast would suffice to tear Frank in two, or one bite from the massive jaw would penetrate his body till his bones were crushed.

"Shall I fire?" whispered Shadrach.

"No. Back up till we reach the boat. I want him."

"But you can't catch him alive."

"Oh, yes I shall."

"It's impossible. His strength is tremendous."

"By the time I'm done he will be as helpless as a kitten."

They retreated step by step toward the boat, the gorilla following them, and when it saw the Rambler it paused and roared again.

Barney and Pomp heard the awful voice, and now saw the beast with feelings of intense dismay.

"I say!" cried Frank.

"Yis, sor!" replied the Irishman.

"Bring a thick wire from the battery—quick!"

"Current on?"

"Full force! I'll paralyze the brute."

Into the wheel-room dashed Barney.

He put on rubber gloves to insulate his hands, fastened one end of a coil of wire to a binding post on the wall, turned a switch to electrify the wire, and rushed out with it.

A blue and red flame hissed and crackled off the end of the wire, and just as he reached the rail, the gorilla made a sudden rush for Frank and the lion-tamer.

Losing not an instant, Barney hurled the coil of wire at it.

The beast paused and recoiled.

It then pounced upon the wire with both paws.

No sooner had it seized the live wire when it received an electric shock so powerful as to knock it down.

The roar that pealed from its big mouth awoke an echo far and near, and it convulsively writhed and flung itself all over the ground.

It could not relax its grip on the wire, and the longer it held on, the more it was electrified by the terrible current.

There were 300 volts flying into the squirming brute, and the spasmodic convulsions of its gigantic body were frightful to witness, as it rolled and kicked on the ground.

Roar after roar pealed from its throat.

"Got him!" cried Frank, delightedly.

"Thunderation! That's a clever game!"

"The current will soon knock all the spunk out of him."

"Nothing short of such a lightning stroke would subdue him."

"Wait! I'll soon render him helpless."

Frank procured an ax and cut down a young tree, lopped off the branches, and left a fork at one end.

"Barney!" he called. "Bring me two pair of shackles and one of those thick leather bags from the store-room."

The Celt hastened away.

While he was getting the things, Frank strode up to the struggling monster, and waiting his chance, he pinned its neck down to the ground with the fork in the tree.

It required all his strength to hold it there.

Down came Barney with the handcuffs.

"Now, Shadrach, hold him here, and I'll render him harmless."

"Look out for yourself," cautioned the lion-tamer.

He was much stronger than Frank, and held the big demon pinned down while the inventor cautiously approached it.

Its legs and arms were flying around furiously.

As Frank stooped over to snap the handcuffs upon its ankles, the brute was watching him.

It had as much command over its feet as it had its hands, and reaching out the one Frank designed to shackle, with lightning-like rapidity it seized him.

A cry of pain escaped him as the sharp nails ripped his trouser leg and pierced his flesh, inflicting a wound.

He was held as if by a vise.

Fortunately he did not lose his wits.

Enduring the pain a few moments, he got one of the bracelets around the beast's ankle, and then snapped it on the other.

He jerked himself away from it then.

"Hurt?" sympathetically asked Shadrach.

"Yes, but I've secured his legs. Barney—Pomp!"

"Wha' yo' want?"

"Yis, sor; what is it?"

"Come down with a rope and rubber gloves for three."

The Celt and the coon obeyed.

Frank then got one of the bracelets on the gorilla's wrist.

"Now help me drag the brute's arms behind its back."

Helpless as the animal was, this feat required all the strength of the three, the rubber gloves they wore insulating their hands from the current charging the brute.

They finally fastened its long arms behind its back.

The leather bag was slipped over its big head, effectually muzzling it, and was then tied around its neck.

Several air holes permitted it to breathe, but it was so blindfolded it could not see.

The forked stick was then removed from its neck, and the current was cut out of the copper wire.

Even then it did not cease roaring and struggling to get free, but the metal shackles firmly held the beast.

He rolled over and over upon the ground, his cries being smothered by the bag, but he was helpless.

"We've got him now!" laughed Frank.

"Knowing what their strength is, I didn't think you'd do it."

"Faith, it's bothered I am ter know how we'll git him aboard."

"Kain't we carry him, Marse Frank?"

"No," replied Frank, shaking his head. "He's too heavy."

"Suppose we hoist him aboard with a tackle?" asked Shadrach.

"Bedad, it's ther level head yer has," said Barney.

"I'se gwine ter fix de fall an' block!" Pomp exclaimed. "Come on, Barney."

Frank nodded, and they went aboard the Rambler.

Having arranged a tackle, they fastened a sling around the gorilla's body, and the coon and Celt wound a windlass.

By this means they hoisted the beast up, opened the door in the cage, and deposited him within one of the three compartments.

Every one was jubilant over their success.

Never before had a full grown gorilla been taken alive.

"As it will be impossible to keep him living in the state we've got him in," said Shadrach, "we had better carry him to the ship and relieve him of his bonds."

The rest concurred, for the lion tamer knew more about these animals than they did, so the boat was started off.

When she reached the ship, the surprise of the crew was intense when they saw the gorilla.

In order to stow him aboard properly and with no danger, Frank chloroformed him when they got him in his cage on the ship, and the bag and shackles were removed.

Our friends then boarded the Rambler, and sent her back to the land again, just as night fell.

They took a different direction this time.

As nothing could be done that night, they landed in a clearing, beside some rocks, had supper, and posting a watch, turned in for the night.

Toward daylight, while Pomp was on duty, he observed a number of dusky forms creeping toward the boat.

At first he imagined they were jackals.

Watching them intently awhile in the gloom, for the moon and stars were hid behind the clouds, he suddenly turned the search-light on.

As the brilliant glare flashed over the figures, he uttered a stifled cry of alarm.

They were men.

It was clear that the negroes had seen the Rambler, and were creeping toward her to open an attack.

Pomp did not say a word.

A grim smile stole over his face though as he thought how he would baffle the plan of the natives.

Grasping the screw-lever, he gave it a pull, intending to send the Rambler flying up in the air.

Unfortunately for this scheme the storage batteries were exhausted, and could not work without recharging.

A startled cry burst from Pomp's thick lips when he realized this, and he hastily shut the doors and windows, bolted them and pressing an electric button, he rang an alarm gong.

The tremendous clamor quickly aroused his friends.

Up-stairs they came rushing scarcely waiting to dress, and dashing into the pilot-house asked the cause of the noise.

"An attack by coons," replied Pomp.

"Where are they?" hastily asked Frank.

"Look out de bull's eyes, honey."

Frank did so.

The sight was very unpleasant.

Around the boat was an army of several hundred men.

"Why don't you send her up?" he asked.

"Kase de batteries am played out, chile," replied Pomp.

"Then all hands arm yourselves."

They rushed away to procure weapons.

In a few minutes they were ready.

But by this time the blacks were swarming all over the boat, yelling and pounding her all over in a desperate effort to gain possession of some of the bright silvery metal of which she was built.

It was clear that unless they were driven away they would soon demolish the flying machine.

"Fire a volley out at them!" cried Frank.

His friends opened the windows to comply when in through the openings flew a dozen spears and arrows tipped with a deadly poison which meant certain death to the one who received only as much as a mere scratch.

## CHAPTER VI.

## A LION HUNT.

THE negroes who attacked the air-ship were well-made fellows of a shiny, jet-black color, wearing loose aprons of red and dark-striped bark-cloth, slung over their shoulders.

They had opal-hued eyeballs, teeth like pearls, a profusion of broad, massive rings of snowy ivory round their arms, and conical ornaments of hippopotamus tooth suspended from their necks.

A wild chorus of shouts escaped them when they shot their weapons in through the windows.

It was almost a miracle that the darts did not strike the crew, and before the blacks could repeat the volley, Frank and his friends shot their revolvers among them.



The weapons worked by pneumatic pressure, and sent out bullets that were loaded with explosive bullets which burst like torpedoes upon contact.

Several of the blacks fell wounded, and the rest became so frightened by the loud explosions of the bullets that they sprang to the ground, deserting the air-boat.

"Keep on firing!" cried Frank.

"Hurroo fer Oireland!" roared Barney. "Och, it's a bit av black-thorn I have here ter welt ther heads av thim spalpeens. Lave me go out an' give thim a taste av it."

"You'd get killed if you did," said Shadrach.

"Den luff me go," advised Pomp. "Golly, wha' a joke dat would be. G'wan out Bahney. Yo' don' know how curious I is ter see how yo' look when you're dead, honey."

"Keep them at bay," said Frank, "and I'll run down-stairs and recharge the batteries so as we can use the screws."

His friends complied.

He then went to the engine room.

Starting the air engine he got the dynamo going.

It was connected with the storage batteries, and they were charged again as rapidly as possible.

Several hours were occupied during this, and in the meantime the defenders up-stairs had more than one skirmish with the black men, who had taken to cover.

The hot sun mounted the heavens and the negroes all began to vanish after a while.

Barney thought they had given up the fight.

"Don't you fool yourself," said Shadrach. "They are very cunning and are up to some deep game, you may depend."

"G'way!" said Pomp, skeptically. "Dey's afraid ob dese yere guns, an' seein' dat dey can't git at us dey flew de coop."

"Begorry, it's not wan av thim is in soight now," said Barney.

"No," answered the lion tamer, "but see there!"

He pointed out the window.

A circle of fire had sprung up around the boat.

It was some distance away, but the dry grass, twigs, leaves and trees were soon in a roaring mass of flame which the wind drove toward them rapidly.

The coon and the Celt were startled.

It was apparent that the natives designed to burn them out, and it was equally as certain that once that roaring fire engulfed the boat, they would be in danger of their lives.

The fire rushed toward them with amazing velocity.

In less than five minutes the Rambler would be engulfed in the midst of the devastating furnace.

"Frank! Frank! It's be foire we're surrounded!" yelled Barney.

"What's that?" yelled the inventor from down-stairs.

"Can we use ther battheries yet?"

"In ten minutes they'll be fully charged."

"But we can't wait. Fer ther love av Heaven cut out ther dynamo an' be afther switchin' thim on ter ther machinery, or it's roast pork we'll all be."

"Start her off!" said Frank, stopping the dynamo.

Barney sprang to the levers, and pulled the one controlling the screws, whereupon the boat darted up into the air.

She just escaped in time, for a few moments afterwards the fire reached the place she had just evacuated.

The heat ascended around the boat but she soon got out of it and left the fire far below.

Frank hastened up-stairs.

A glance out the window showed him what happened.

"Did the blacks do it?" he asked.

"Golly, yes," assented Pomp, "an' dis chile fink dey bu'n us fo' shuah."

"We must not let the batteries give out that way again," said the inventor, reprovingly. "There are two sets. While we are deriving power from one, the dynamos ought to be charging the other. You know that each set is not calculated to last more than twenty four hours. Had such a thing occurred while we were high in the air, our doom would have been sealed."

They watched the fire burn away a large tract of ground and finally disappear over the crest of the hill.

The Rambler traveled near the ground for several days without her crew meeting anything but swarms of jackals.

A pair of them were easily taken by stunning them with a rifle ball, when they were thrust into a compartment of the cage.

Several other small animals were captured the same way.

On the night of the fourth day after leaving the ship, they descended in a woods to replenish their water tank at a spring which Frank had seen trickling toward a large brook.

The Rambler paused in a large, rocky clearing, across which the spring stream ran.

Here Frank and Shadrach alighted to try the water.

As they stooped over the lake to take a drink, the giant suddenly gave a start of surprise, rose bolt upright and gazed around:

"Thunderation!" he exclaimed. "Here's a discovery."

"What do you mean?" asked Frank.

"See that path that crosses the stream!"

"Yes—what of it?"

"It is made by animals that come along here every night and proceed to the brook to drink."

"Do you think this is a good place to wait for game?"

"The best place in the world. Ha, what's this?"

"A deer coming through the underbrush."

"Can you drop it without killing the beast?"

"Yes," replied Frank, drawing a pistol.

"Then try and we'll use it to bait larger game."

Frank took careful aim at the beast and fired.

It fell on its side, kicking furiously, and Shadrach ran toward it, reached the beast and knelt on its neck.

The ball had partially stunned it.

"Fetch me a rope!" cried the lion tamer.

Frank complied, and they secured it around the animal's neck, and by the time they finished it revived and arose.

It struggled and fought to get away, but they dragged it along the animal path to the edge of the brook where they tied it to a tree.

Then Shadrach gathered a lot of large green leaves, and scraping a thick, sticky gum from some trees, he coated one side of many of the leaves with it.

Having prepared a great many of the leaves in this way, he carefully laid them, gummy side up, over the path.

Frank watched him curiously.

"What are you doing that for?" he asked.

"I am convinced that lions frequent this path," answered the giant, "and as the cries of the captive deer will lure them this way they will tread on these leaves. Then you'll see some fun. The gum will make the leaves stick to their paws, and as lions are rather proud beasts, they will try to get the leaves off. That's when the circus will begin."

"I don't see how."

"Wait; you'll see fast enough. It's the native way of catching them alive. All you and I need do now is to arm ourselves, climb up a tree, wait and watch."

"How about the Rambler?"

"Better send her away, as she might make them shy."

They returned to the air-boat, and having procured some weapons, they told Barney to take the boat up in the air.

Then they returned to the vicinage of the lion-trap, and getting up in a huge baobab tree, they comfortably seated themselves.

Several hours passed by.

The captive deer kept struggling to get free.

Its cries were frequent and plaintive.

Toward midnight a distant rumbling roar was heard.

At first Frank thought it was a gorilla, but Shadrach said:

"You are mistaken. It's a lion. He is coming this way."

"Probably scents the deer, or hears its cry," suggested Frank.

"More than likely both, for they have keen ears."

They turned their glances toward the clearing down upon which the moonlight was streaming, and presently observed the beast.

It was a male of very large size, with a tremendous mane, an elongated nose, and of a fine color.

He paused every few moments to vent a thunderous roar, and held his big head high in the air.

Then on he came again, his eyes glaring like balls of fire, his big face turned in the direction the deers cries came from.

Crossing the open space he reached the margin of the woods, and crouching down, glared ahead.

Then he crept forward, stooping close to the ground, and followed the path toward the brook.

Frank and Shadrach remained watching him as quietly as mice.

His mane was bristling now, for he saw the deer, and he stealthily crept forward without making a sound, intent upon springing on the captive beast, and devouring it.

In a few moments the lion reached the gummed leaves, and they began to adhere to his huge paws.

He paused, raised his paws, and tried to remove the leaves by rubbing his leg against his head.

The leaves left his paws, but stuck to his face.

It worried him, for fresh leaves stuck to him, and as fast as he brushed them off, they adhered to his face, and he got others on.

The leaves sticking to his face covered it till he actually blindfolded himself.

## CHAPTER VII.

### HUMAN BAIT.

UPON finding himself getting more inextricably covered with the leaves than he was in the beginning, the lion began to whine, roar and stagger blindly.

He forgot the captive deer he was after, flung himself down, rolled on the ground, and pawed at his head to get rid of the leaves, but only became more covered than before.

Then his patience gave out, and he bounded to his feet and made a dash to run away, but being blinded, he plunged head first against a tree and was knocked sprawling.

His roars now became fierce, deep and terrible, for a panic overcame him, and he did not know what to do.

"Now we've got him!" chuckled Shadrach. "He's getting bewildered. In a few minutes more he will nearly be crazy."

"Going down?" asked Frank, eagerly.

"May as well see how we can secure him."

"All right—come ahead."

And down from the tree they went.

They found the frantic lion rushing about wildly.

He heard them, and was striving by every means in his power to get rid of the sticky, blinding leaves.

The lion-tamer released the deer.



Making a noose in the end of the rope that held the captive, he boldly approached the lion and made an attempt to lasso him.

Unluckily the rope knocked the leaves from one side of the beast's face, uncovering his right eye.

It let the animal see Shadrach.

A furious growl pealed hoarsely from its throat, it lashed its flanks with its tail, and with one spring it reached the man.

Striking against Shadrach's body the brute knocked him down, and opening its red mouth it made an attempt to bite him.

But the lion-tamer did not flinch.

He was too much accustomed to handling these beasts to fear this one, and quickly rammed his arm in its mouth.

Down to its throat went his hand, choking it, and the brute finding it impossible to close its jaws recoiled.

Shadrach did not let go of him, although his breast and leg were cut by the animal's claws in the first assault.

"Reade!" he gasped, "cover his eyes!"

Then he began to struggle with the beast, for it was fighting to get the man's arm out of its throat.

Had Shadrach not been a perfect giant, and possessed of the most extraordinary strength, the beast would have torn him to pieces in its furious struggles.

Frank seized several of the leaves, and rushing up to the monster, he clapped them over its eyes again.

The lion was blinded once more.

"Now, the rope—around his leg!" gasped Shadrach.

Frank secured it.

This done, the lion tamer withdrew his arm.

A mighty roar escaped the brute, and Shadrach took care to get out of the animal's way now.

The brute was fastened by the leg, and every time it made a rush to get away they pulled its leg from under it.

"I'll fix him so he won't have much life left in him!" said the lion tamer. "Hand me up the end of the rope, when I climb that tree, sir."

He mounted an oak, and Frank gave him the line.

Shadrach passed it over a stout branch, and taking the end down on the other side, both he and the inventor began to haul.

In this manner the brute was pulled under the branch and then hoisted up by the leg until his nose was off the ground.

Fasting the end of the line to the tree trunk, Frank and his companion surveyed the beast.

Every few moments he violently shook himself, and roared like thunder, but he could not get down.

The blood kept settling in his head, and finally left him in a half stupid state.

Frank then went to summon the air-boat.

He had scarcely reached the clearing, however, when he observed a huge lionless rushing toward him.

It was the mate of the one they had captured.

He barely had time to raise his rifle when the brute, uttering a fiendish yell, crouched to spring at him.

Frank fired.

Up in the air leaped the beast.

She fell beside the young inventor, to all appearances dead.

The Rambler had been hovering over the spot, and Frank whistled up to Barney as a signal to lower her.

The Irishman obeyed.

As she paused on the ground Frank was surprised to see that the lioness had merely been stunned, as the ball had glanced off her hard skull, leaving only a gash.

He quickly rigged a tackle, with the assistance of his friends hoisted the senseless brute aboard, and put her in the cage.

Here she afterward recovered, feeling as well as ever.

The Rambler was then raised and sent over to where the big male hung by the leg from the tree branch.

They swung him over into the door of the cage, cut the rope from his leg, and locked him in.

He too, rapidly revived as the blood left his head.

Poor Shadrach was badly torn, and at once dressed his wounds.

The air-boat was then supplied with water, sent aloft, and started for the coast, the two lions fighting like demons in the cage.

"Shure there's only wan thing agin thim bastes," said Barney.

"And what may that be?" asked Frank.

"I didn't catch thim myself."

"You'll have a chance to take a hand in to-morrow," laughed Frank. "We saw some ostriches on the plain to-day, and I'm going to get a pair of those birds if I can."

The Rambler finally reached the coast.

Here the animals were transferred to the ship and they ran back to the land again.

It rained hard the following two days, and a few small beasts were caught and taken to the ship.

None of the birds were seen, and Frank steered the boat toward a distant swampy jungle he had sighted previously.

There was a river running through it, half hidden under a green arcade of trees and bushes.

As the boat drew near the place they heard a great shout below in human voices and saw a native village.

The blacks were excitedly pointing at the Rambler, and as an idea occurred to Frank, he cried:

"I'm going to land down there and get the assistance of those people if I can. Shadrach, can you speak to them?"

"I'll try," replied the lion-tamer.

As the boat neared the ground he went to the rail and, speaking in a dialect common to that region, he called out something to the people.

An unintelligible jargon of answers came back.

Shadrach shook his head, for he did not understand them.

For a moment it looked as if he could not make known what he had to say to them.

But at this juncture a black woman, holding a baby about two years old in her arms, answered him in the same dialect he used, saying she could speak to him.

She stated that she was of a tribe that spoke the language Shadrach used, but that the dialect of the villagers was different.

"What do you want these people to do for you, Reade?" asked the lion tamer when he explained what was said.

"See if they will help me to get a crocodile out of the river, and if they will offer them a lot of beads and copper wire."

Shadrach told the woman what Frank said.

"Yes, yes," she answered. "I can do that myself with this child. But you must give the people presents too."

"How do you mean with the child?" asked Shadrach.

"Why, I will tie him by the leg to a stake near the river bank as I have often done before. His cries will bring the crocodiles out of the water to devour him. You must all be ready to kill the animals before they can reach him."

Shadrach told Frank what she said.

"That's the very plan I was about to propose to her," said the inventor. "It is a common practice among these natives to catch crocodiles that way. Get the beads and wire Barney."

"Yis, sor," replied the Irishman, and off he went.

They had a large supply of trinkets aboard to be used for just such an emergency as this, and lavishly scattered them among the villagers, thereby winning their friendship.

The Rambler was then landed near the river and Frank and Barney alighted and joined the negress.

She led them up the stream to a point where the shore was flat, and paused at a stake half buried in the ground.

Tying the leg of the little coon to the stake, she left it there and hastening away hid in some bushes.

Barney and Frank secreted themselves.

After a while the child missed its mother, and began to yell.

It howled and bawled, and getting upon its hands and knees it raised up its kinky little head and stared around with tears streaming from its eyes.

This continued for some time.

Then a number of huge crocodiles were seen on the surface of the water swimming toward the spot where the youngster was tied.

Crawling upon the shore, the scaly monsters crept up toward the screaming child, intent upon making a meal of it.

Frank and Barney had sunk almost to their knees in the mud, and were vainly striving to extricate their legs to rush up to the child.

"We can't get out of this!" gasped the inventor. "Shoot them!"

They raised their rifles and pulled the triggers.

But no discharge followed.

It then flashed across their minds that they had forgotten to load their rifles.

A chill of intense horror overwhelmed them, for they saw the crocodiles within a few feet of the child.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### CHASING A PHANTOM.

"HEY!" screamed Frank at the woman. "Get that baby, quick, or those beasts will eat it alive!"

The black woman did not understand what Frank said, but she saw the peril her child was in and rushed for it.

She was so near and ran so fast, that she reached the infant before the slow-moving reptiles.

Fortunately she was armed with a knife.

With one gash she severed the little one's bonds.

Then she snatched him up and fled from the saurians.

Frank by this time had floundered out of the mud, and hastily loading his rifle and gripping a stout rope, he ran around to the shore, followed by Barney.

Getting between the three crocodiles and the shore, they cut off the retreat of the animals back to the river.

As there is no joint in a crocodile's neck, the reptiles could not turn their heads, and Frank, knowing this, had not the least hesitation approaching them.

Calling Barney over to the biggest one, which was laboriously turning around, the young inventor thrust the barrel of his rifle under the creature, and the Celt doing the same, they, with a few hoists, turned it over on its back.

In this position, on land, the creature was almost as helpless as a turtle under the same conditions.

Another one was turned over, but the third escaped.

Barney then hastened back to the air-boat, and telling Shadrach and Pomp what happened, the Rambler was steered over to where the saurians laid.

The tackle was used again, and they were hoisted aboard and put into one of the cages.

By this time the woman and her child had vanished, and the clock chimed the hour of twelve in the boat.

The rain had stopped.



A tremendous shouting of men reached Frank's ears from up the river bank some distance.

Frank raised the Rambler up in the air and observed a most exciting scene up the river a short distance.

Half a dozen of the natives were engaged in a hippopotamus hunt.

A herd of the beasts had been found enjoying themselves in the water, and the negroes proceeded to attack them.

They were armed with harpoons, with ropes tied to their ends, while attached to the other ends of the lines were floats to keep them at the top of the water.

Two of the negroes swam out to the herd.

Approaching as near as possible, they hurled their harpoons at the animals and one missed, while the other struck a large bull.

The beast began to frantically struggle.

With some difficulty the other negroes attached a long line to the float and proceeded to drag the beast to the shore.

It required a tremendous haul, for the monster was one of the largest of its kind, the bulk of its body being little inferior to that of an elephant.

Its belly almost touched the ground, as its legs were very short, its thick, dark-brown skin was covered with an oily fluid, its head was large, with small eyes and ears, the muzzle tumid, and the great lips concealed its large front teeth.

The animal's voice was loud and harsh, sounding like the creaking and groaning of a wooden door.

By exerting all their power, the blacks succeeded in pulling him into shallow water.

Here he suddenly changed his tactics, and rushed on shore at the men furiously.

They hurled half a dozen lances into his open jaws.

Piercing his tongue and mouth, they had but little effect, excepting to enrage the animal all the more.

The natives then scooped up sand in their hands, and flinging it into his glaring eyes, caused him to retreat to the water, where he cleared them out.

Several times was this repeated.

The last time the animal charged on the blacks, it knocked two of them down, and trampled them.

Giving utterance to the loudest screams, the poor fellows gave up all hope of life.

At this juncture the air boat dashed up to them.

Frank was on the deck, and with a boat-hook he caught the harpoon line, raised and seized it.

Slipping it around a cleak, he secured it, and as the boat passed on, the hippopotamus was dragged away from its two yelling victims.

The animal tried to resist the boat.

It could not get away, however, and the natives hastily arose, and the whole party ran after it, prodded the brute with their lance points, and compelled it to run with the boat.

They soon reached the village.

Here all the people came out to meet them.

Surrounding the big beast, they testified to their delight by the utterance of the wildest shouts.

"Shadrach, ask them what they intend to do with the animal," said Frank to the lion-tamer.

The giant shouted to the woman with the child.

She spoke to the negroes, and then said to him:

"The animal is yours, if you want it."

"We do," quickly replied Shadrach.

"You have given us nice presents. We are satisfied."

"Then we shall take it away."

"Very well," said the negress.

"Tell the men to pull the lances from its mouth."

She complied, and our friends then started the Rambler away.

The hippopotamus was bound to follow the boat, for when it failed to do so the rope tightened and it suffered the most intense pain from the harpoon imbedded in its body.

In this manner they finally succeeded in reaching the coast with their prizes and safely got them on the ship.

They found the crew busily employed lading the ship with such food as the animals required, with the assistance of some natives, who had been bribed to work for them.

On the following day they took their departure for the plains.

Barney was at the wheel, and the others were down in the cabin, as the Rambler ran out over a stretch of desert land.

Far ahead the Irishman saw the figures of several ostriches.

They seemed to be running along swiftly, and he steered the air-boat after them at the top of her speed.

"Bedad, I'll catch thim afore I opens me mouth ter any wan!" exclaimed Barney, with a grin. "Wid wan puck in ther neck av ther bow, I'll krock thim haythen roosters sinceless."

He kept his eyes upon the scrambling figures, without noticing that Pomp had come in behind him.

The coon leveled a glass at the figures, and his thick lips stretched from ear to ear in a terrific grin.

At that moment the boat was shooting along at the rate of a mile a minute, but to Barney's surprise he did not observe that he gained any on the birds.

"Faix, it's loightnin' express thrains they bees!" he growled in perplexed tones. "Whoiver heerd av thim koind av bastes roonin' as fast as that afore?"

Unable to keep quiet any longer, Pomp uttered a chuckle.

Barney heard it, and glanced around with a scowl on his face, for

his temper was sadly ruffled by the want of success he had to overtake the birds.

"What's boitin' yer, yer painted babboon?" he growled.

"Oh, golly! Yo' fink yo' kin ketch dem yer chickens?"

"I will, be heavens, if I bunsht me biler doin' it!"

"Yo' can't!" flatly asserted the coon.

"Arrah, it's confidance yez has entolrely."

"Fo' shuah, chile."

"I'll bet money on it."

"Done go yo', honey."

"Have yez much m'oney ter lose, nagur?"

"Spec's dar's fo'teen dollahs in dis wad," said Pomp, producing the roll.

"It's moine! Hand it over widout throyin' ter win."

"G'way dar, Irish! Wha' you'se dreamin'? Put up de scads!"

Barney covered the amount in a twinkling, for he thought he had a regular walk-over.

Then he put on every extra volt of electro-motive force the machinery could generate, and steered as straight as a rule for the flying figures.

A roar of mirth escaped Pomp.

He seemed to be immensely tickled over something.

The frown deepened on Barney's brow, and he ground his teeth, for the birds seemed to be just as far away as ever.

He had the air-boat booming along at a terrific pace, and did not lose an inch of ground.

"Bedad, I'll have thim yit!" he hissed.

"Den yo' hab ter run de yudder way," laughed Pomp.

"Is it looney yez are?"

"Go long! Mean jist wot I say, chile."

"Do yez take me fer a crab ter go backward?"

"No, but you'se chasin' a ghost."

"A ghost is it?"

"Fo' shuah! Dat am a mirage!"

"Howly mackerel!"

Barney grabbed a spy glass and examined the bird's figures.

To his chagrin he saw that the coon told the truth.

He had been chasing a shadow.

Pomp pointed back the way they came from.

Barney looked out the rear window.

There were the birds whose reflected images he had been pursuing racing away in the opposite direction.

Pomp had been playing a practical joke upon him, but had, of course, won the bet, and it made him wild.

"Be heavens, I'm a jackass!" he groaned. "Pomp, ye divil, kick me!"

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE ARABS' PREY.

Nor to lose the birds, of which there were three, Barney turned the Rambler around and started her off after them.

They were running to the northward at the rate of twenty-eight miles an hour, their massive legs going so fast that the outline could not be seen, and their short wings spread to catch the wind.

Having acute sight, the ostriches could see for a distance of six miles, and evidently observed the air-boat.

She was soon making a mile a minute.

Rapidly overhauling the excited birds, she bore down upon them, and drew so near that the Irishman could see the magnificent feathers of the male birds.

The barboles in them do not adhere together as is the case with the feathers on almost all other birds.

Frank and Shadrach came up to the pilot-house.

"What are you after?" asked the inventor.

"Canaries," replied Barney, with a grin.

"Why, ostriches! When did you scare them up?"

"Just now. It's race horses they are wid ther legs."

"Few horses can catch them. See if I can lasso a pair."

He procured a line and went out on deck.

One of the birds seemed to have lost all hope, for it suddenly paused at a bush and buried its head in it.

The stupid creature imagined its entire body was hidden, and thus thought it would escape the hunters.

"Stop the boat!" called Frank.

"D'yer moind that wan hoidin'," replied Barney.

"Pomp, come out and help me!"

"Faith, it's a dandy ther nagur is at liftin' chickens."

"G'way dar!" growled Pomp. "Want yo' neck broke?"

He alighted with Frank a moment afterwards.

They approached the ostrich quietly, but the bird's hearing was as marvelous as its sight.

No sooner were they close to it when the bird arose and dealt Pomp a terrific kick.

A yell escaped the coon.

He was knocked over like a ten-pin.

The kick of an ostrich is something terrific.

A deep, hollow roar escaped the bird, not unlike a lion's cry.

Then it began to utter a sort of cackling sound, and as its rage increased, it hissed very loudly and violently kicked at Frank.

He barely had time to escape its hoof by springing back, and then spread the open noose of the lasso on the ground.

Retaining the end of the line in his hand, he rushed up to the bird to invite a second attack.



It was thoroughly aroused. Spreading its wings, it dashed at him furiously. He recoiled quickly, and the moment its feet were in the circle of the noose, he gave the line a sudden jerk and haul. Instantly the legs of the bird were pinioned. Attempting to run away, it pulled the noose tighter and its legs being bound together it tripped and fell. By this time Pomp had risen. He was groaning dismally. "Come here and help me!" cried Frank. "Ain't gwine neah dat animile!" the coon replied. "You must lend me your aid! Hurry up." "Golly! I'se got de hull front ob my stomach kicked off." "Hold this end of the line!" Frank thrust it in his hand. Then he rushed up to the fallen bird. He wound the line around its legs and tied it fast. The ostrich was caught. "Bring the boat here, Barney!" he shouted. The Irishman obeyed. As soon as it was close enough, Frank and Pomp seized the bird, and lifted it upon the deck where Shadrach and Barney thrust it into the cage. The coon and the inventor then mounted the air boat. "After the others!" cried Frank. "But it's tin moile away they bes!" said Barney. "You can easily head them off." "How's that?" asked Barney. "Don't you see that ostriches run in a curve?" "I do that," said the Irishman, noticing it for the first time. "They never run in a straight line. That's the only advantage a hunter or horseman has to get in gun range." Off shot the air-ship in hot pursuit. The two remaining birds were scudding along swiftly, and yet by cutting across the curve they were describing it was an easy matter to head them off. In a short time the Rambler reached the nearest one. Frank had another lasso ready. He stood on the forward deck. As the Rambler shot up to the bird, Frank cried: "Slacken speed, Barney!" "Slower she goes!" "Hold her alongside the bird!" "Howld her it is!" Whizz! went the lasso as Frank spoke, the noose settled over the head and long neck of the cackling bird, and the next moment it was secured. Frank hauled the line tight. The bird's neck was pulled up close to the side of the deck. Here Frank fastened the line. "Barney, stop the boat!" he cried. The Celt complied. It was now impossible for the ostrich to move. The Rambler anchored her where she stood. "Thunderation, what a catch!" laughed Shadrach. "Go down and tie his legs!" said Frank, to the lion tamer. As soon as this was done, the bird was pulled up on the boat, and put with the other one. The third ostrich had gone running away, but they did not molest it, as they had all they wanted. As they glanced in the direction taken by the bird, they caught sight of several Arabs driving two zebras before them over the desert lands. Frank at once steered the boat toward them. As they drew closer to the nomads who were mounted on fiery steeds and yelling furiously, they saw them hurl their lances at one of the animals. The weapons pierced its body, and one of them striking the beast in the shoulder sent it down. A triumphant shout burst from the wild riders, and they dashed up to their prey and surrounded it. The other zebra was speeding off like the wind, its white body with black stripes lending it a singular look. "Say! are you going to tackle that animal?" asked Shadrach. "Yes. It is seldom they are found out of the hills and most inaccessible places," said Frank. "It won't do to miss this chance." "But the Arabs own him." "Not until they catch the beast." "They'll dispute our claim to it." "Let them. I'm going to have the animal." The Arabs had secured the quagga and were pointing at the air-ship which sped close to the ground. In the distance was a woods. The beast was heading for it. "Did you ever hear of creasing a mustang?" asked Frank. "That's done by the cowboys in western America." "Yes, Shadrach. I'm going to crease that zebra." "Do you think you can do it?" "I'm going to make an effort." Frank took an ordinary cartridge rifle. Leveling it at the zebra he fired. The ball sped true to its mark. It was aimed at a particular sinew in the creature's neck just above

where the spine joined the skull, and the effect was to temporarily paralyze the animal without doing it any permanent injury. The zebra went down as if it were felled with an ax. Up to it flew the Rambler. Frank just had time to drop a lasso over its neck, when the zebra recovered, arose and sped away again. The inventor tied the rope to a ringbolt in the bow. "Barney, back the boat!" he cried. The Irishman carried out this order, but the strength of the animal was greater than the screws, and it dragged the air-boat along as if it were a feather. Frank saw that it was useless. "Drop her to the ground!" he continued. This was done. It anchored the animal. The zebra kicked, reared and plunged. It could not get away though, and the noose choked it. This continued for some time, when Pomp chanced to glance back, and gave a start. "Fo' de Lawd's sake!" he gasped. "See dar, Marse Frank." "What's the matter?" queried the inventor. "Dem Arab niggahs done comin'." Frank now saw the wild riders. They were plunging swiftly toward the air-boat. On they came, their lances glittering in the sunlight and their flowing robes fluttering in the breeze. It was very evident that they disputed our friends' possession of the zebra, for no sooner did they arrive in range, when they began to fire at them with the long rifles they had been carrying slung on their backs. As the whistling bullets flew around the occupants of the Rambler, they rushed inside to get out of danger.

## CHAPTER X.

## CAGING AN ENEMY.

"Howly beans! Shall I raise ther Rambler in ther air?" "No, Barney!" cried Frank, his eyes flashing resentment. "To do that we would have to cut the zebra loose and I am determined to hold it." "Those galoots will destroy the air boat if you don't," said Shadrach. "Gimme a gun," Pomp roared. "I isn't gwine ter stan' dem shots no mo'. Wha' de mattah wif youse—gettin' skeered ob dem niggahs?" "Pomp has got my ideas exactly," cried Frank. "Arm yourselves and repel the Arabs ere they commit any more mischief." The crash and jingle of glass windows breaking before the rifle shots of the Arabs hastened their movements. In a few minutes all were armed. Frank drew the shutters over the windows of the wheel room. They contained several loopholes and protected the four inmates of the boat for the Arab's bullets flattened against the metal plates. Mannng the loopholes, our friends began to discharge their rifles at their aggressors. One of the horses was shot from under them, but the rider nimbly landed on his sandaled feet, and crouching behind the body of the dead beast, continued to fire. A ball struck one of the Arabs and shattered his arm. His yells of pain could have been heard a great distance away as he rolled on the ground. The other men scattered. All were magnificent riders, and hanging over on the side of their horses furthest removed from Frank and his friends, they protected themselves with their animals' bodies. In this manner they got away to a safe distance, while the wounded man and the one who had been crouching behind the carcass of the dead horse, arose, took to their heels and followed their friends. "The victory is ours," said Frank. "Let them go." "Share it's ther shtrouped mule is ours, yez mane," laughed Barney. "We haven't get the varmint aboard, yet," Shadrach said. "How yo' gwine ter git him?" asked the coon. "Sling him!" replied Frank. "Is it a Hercules yez think we are?" asked the Celt. "He means to use a sling and hoist him," the lion tamer laughed. "Oh!" said Pomp, who, like Barney, imagined Frank meant to pitch the zebra aboard by means of their hands alone. "Dot's different." The animal had almost exhausted itself with its violent exertions to get away, and now was an almost passive victim. Without much difficulty they got him aboard, and into the cage. As the flying machine was so heavily ballasted that she could only rise a dozen feet from the ground, they sent her flying for the coast, and finally reached the ship. Depositing their cargo aboard of her, they were startled to learn that a ship had made an attack upon the Black Bass the night before, but was repulsed with the signal gun. "What was the object of the attack?" queried Frank, in surprise. "She is a slaver," the captain replied. "Her crew were all Arabs but one. He was a white man, and demanded our surrender. He seemed to know all about us, much to our surprise." "Describe him," said Frank, with a frown.



"He had a mop of dark hair, a bristly black mustache, and I heard one of the Arabs call him Sim Nixon—"

"Thunderation!" roared Shadrach, "it's your old enemy!"

"Yes, Barnum's discharged animal hunter, who was trying to smash this machine, so it could not be used to get these wild beasts for the circus. When he escaped from Barney and Pomp on the way to the police station, he must have crossed the sea and made his way to some point where he fell in with those Arabs."

"But why did he want this vessel?" the captain asked.

"To bring the animals to Barnum, I presume, and get paid the money offered for each one or pair caught."

"Ay, ay, that must have been it."

"What became of them?"

"They sailed down the coast," replied the captain.

Frank foresaw trouble with the man, and resolved to go and look for him ere he could do the Black Bess any injury.

The air-ship was accordingly sent over the water.

It was then early morning, and a keen lookout was maintained for some signs of the ship, of which Frank had a description.

She was sighted late in the afternoon lying at anchor in a small bay on the coast.

The Rambler descended toward her.

Long before she swooped down from the sky, the crew of the ship saw her, and excited by her appearance, were earnestly talking to Sim Nixon, who understood their language.

The rascal then hid himself in the cabin.

Frank had observed his action, however.

The young inventor was a fine linguist, and when the air-ship came to a pause above the slaves, he shouted in Arabic:

"I want to speak to the white man you have on board."

"There is no such person on this ship," the captain replied.

"You tell a falsehood, for I saw him enter the cabin."

"Well," replied the Arab, coolly, "you cannot see him."

"Persist in your refusal and I shall burn him from his lair."

"Bah! we have no fear of you!"

"Very well; you'll see," said Frank, grimly.

He passed inside and picked up a small metallic frame to which two insulated wires were secured at one side, while on the other two carbons were set so their points almost touched.

One of the wires was secured to the battery binding post.

Frank handed the other wire to Pomp and said:

"When I give you the word touch this wire to that binder."

"Yassah," replied the coon.

Going out on deck with the frame Frank lowered it toward the deck of the slave ship.

Fearing it was dangerous the Arabs made a rush for it.

"Now, Pomp!" cried Frank.

Several dusky hands were outstretched to grasp the frame.

Just then the coon flashed the current into it.

An enormous ball of blinding flame sputtered from the carbons, and with a yell, as it burnt their fingers, the Arabs rushed back.

Down continued the flame.

It swung against the cabin door.

Instantly the woodwork was ignited.

Along the edge of the cabin roof ran the sputtering fire, lighting the wood, and the Arabs grasped their buckets, drew water, dashed it at the fire, and yelled at Nixon to come out.

They feared that a continued refusal to produce the man would result in the burning of the ship.

Nixon appeared with a scowl on his face.

He shook his fist at Frank and yelled furiously:

"What do you want of me?"

"I wish to have you aboard this vessel," Frank replied, coolly.

"Well, you won't get me."

"Fool! Do you wish to die?"

"You dare not kill me!"

"Don't be too confident! I'll blow that craft to fragments if you don't surrender yourself to me!"

Just then the Arabs, having procured some weapons, began to discharge them up at the Rambler.

Her metal hull resisted them.

"Pomp!" said Frank.

"Wha' am it, sah?"

"Bring me a grenade."

"Yas, sah."

The coon hastened inside.

He soon returned with a bomb.

Frank hurled it down at the ship's deck.

The missile struck in the midship section abaft of the mast.

Here it exploded with a tremendous roar.

A huge aperture was blown through the deck, the debris flying around in a shower.

The howl that arose from the terrified slavers was tremendous.

A flying piece of timber hit Nixon on the head and knocked him senseless upon the deck.

"Lower the Rambler!" Frank sang out.

This was done.

She paused beside the ship.

Boarding the slaver, the inventor dragged Nixon on the Rambler.

"Now, you fellows, dare to attack the animal-ship again!" he shouted at the Arabs, "and I'll blow your vessel to pieces."

They all protested that they wouldn't.

Frank then caused the Rambler to return to the Black Bess.

Here he gave the captain an account of what he had done and put Tim Nixon in an animal cage for safe keeping.

The next day the Rambler returned to the land.

She spent several days in search of animals such as they wanted, Barney playing his fiddle, and Pomp his banjo during off hours to pass away the time.

A pair of hyaenas, a gnu, two buffaloes and an ibex goat were caught, carried to the ship, and the Rambler then ran up to the northward toward Lake Ichad in Bornu, in pursuit of a herd of giraffes, but they escaped in a woods.

A native whom they encountered told Shadrach that some elephants had been seen in that vicinity.

It was late in the night of the second day after leaving the Black Bess when the air-ship neared the lake—a dark body of water, surrounded by the wildest scenery and most rank vegetation.

"Shadrach, lower the boat on the shore," said Frank.

"Going to stop here?" asked the lion-tamer.

"For to-night. Elephants generally hold out near the lakes."

Shadrach nodded and pulled the lever to slacken the speed of the screws, when an awful report was heard down below in the hold.

The shock of the explosion knocked the boat spinning through the air and she landed in the lake with a mighty upheaval of the water.

## CHAPTER XI.

### TRAPPING AN ELEPHANT.

EVERY one on the Rambler was knocked senseless by the violent action of the air-boat.

She was fifty feet in the sky when the explosion occurred, and only her fall in the lake saved her from utter destruction.

After striking she sunk, but her boat-like form caused her to rise immediately to the surface.

Here she floated buoyantly.

Full half an hour passed ere Frank revived.

He had struck his head on the floor in falling.

He found Shadrach senseless but uninjured.

Rushing down below, he observed that all the lights were out.

Knowing where to find a lantern he got it, struck a light and made an examination.

The floor of the engine room at one end was blown to pieces, showing the bare hull of metal underneath.

Above, the wires were broken, one of the wheel shafts was down, and the dynamo was knocked over.

Barney and Pomp lay among the wreckage alive, but badly cut and bruised, and Frank dragged them out.

He saw that the hull was intact and would float.

What the reason of the explosion was he could not think, but he detected a gassy odor in the air that plainly indicated that it had something to do with the shock.

Hauling his friends up-stairs, he found the lion tamer sitting up, rubbing the back of his head.

"Thunderation! What was it, Reade?" Shadrach gasped.

"Heaven only knows. Hand me that whisky bottle."

"Is Barney dead?" asked the lion tamer, complying.

"No, senseless. Are you O. K.?"

"Yes, thank goodness, but I got a horrible thump on the head."

"Go down in the engine room and bring Pomp up."

Shadrach arose and carried out Frank's request, and the inventor worked upon the Irishman to revive him.

This was finally accomplished.

Barney was groaning dimly.

"I'm a dead marn—I'm a dead marn!" he kept saying.

"How did this occur?" asked Frank.

"Shure, I let a bomb ship out av me hand ther flure."

"Your carelessness might have cost our lives."

"I know it," groaned Barney. "I'm sorry it didn't."

"Sorry?" asked Frank, in surprise.

"Yis. Then I'd a-got hung, bad cess ter me!"

Frank had to laugh, despite the seriousness of the case.

The lion-tamer now carried Pomp in and carefully laid him down on the sofa.

"Gin!" gasped the coon. "I want gin!"

"Here's whisky, poor slob," pityingly said Shadrach.

"Dat'll do, Marse Shadrach," and Pomp took a long pull.

Barney eyed the coon enviously.

Then he began to groan harder than ever.

"What's the matter?" questioned Frank.

"It's a shpasm I have!" gasped the Celt, making a horrible face.

"Lord! I hope you ain't injured internally?"

"Infernally? Be heavens, I'm booked fer me grave. Oh—ouch—this pain in me kidney! Gimme whisky—quick—a bucket av it!"

Frank grasped the bottle, and a gurgling emanated from the Celt's lips as he took a swig.

Pomp now began to writhe.

"Sen' fo' a Mefodis' preacher!" he howled.

"What ails you?" roared Shadrach, in startled tones.

"Gosh amighty, I'se gwine ter hab a fit."

"The deuce you are!"

"Liquor—liquor! Hurry! I'se faintin'!"

He rolled his eyes, humped up his back, and kicked his legs in the air.

Shadrach glanced at him a moment, and then it began to dawn upon his mind that Barney and Pomp were a pair of frauds.

They were evidently playing him and Frank for the whisky.



He took the bottle from Frank.  
 "Open your mouth!" said he.  
 Pomp's gash gaped wide and his convulsions ceased.  
 But instead of giving him any more liquor, the lion-tamer quietly jammed a big sponge in the opening.  
 "I think you've got enough to start a beer saloon," he remarked.  
 "Amn't yo' gwine fo' ter doctah me?" roared Pomp, as he pulled out the sponge and glared at Shadrach.  
 "If I did you'd die."  
 "Wha'—wha'—wha' yo' say?"  
 "I've given you poison by mistake."  
 "Whoop!" roared Pomp.  
 "Murder!" yelled Barney.  
 And with one spring they were upon their feet.  
 They grabbed each other with looks of horror on their faces.  
 Frank saw the joke and now chimed in:  
 "So you have, Shadrach. That's the bottle with strychnine in it."  
 "Sen' fo' de undahtakah!" howled the coon, dancing up and down.  
 "Ouch! I fale it burn in' me biorchial tube!" wailed Barney.  
 "Heavens, what a mistake!" said Shadrach, in dismal tones.  
 "Dreadful!" added Frank, gravely shaking his head.  
 "Have yez a stomach poop?" roared Barney, imploringly.  
 "Gimme sumpin' ter make me gag!" pleaded Pomp.  
 It was very evident by their frisky actions that neither of them were hurt as badly as they imagined they were.  
 Frank burst out laughing at them.  
 It hurt Barney's feelings dreadfully.  
 "Begorry it's glad yez are we're kilt!" he cried, reproachfully.  
 "Get out!" chafed Shadrach.  
 "But luck at ther mugs av yez!"  
 "We were only fooling."  
 "Foolin', is it?"  
 "Yes, you ain't poisoned at all."  
 Barney and Pomp cooled off.  
 They saw that they had been hoaxed.  
 "That's wun on me!" said the Celt, dryly.  
 "Ise gwine ter crawl in a knot hole, an' pull de hole in aftah me," added Pomp, in tones of the greatest mortification.  
 Then they left the room, for Frank and the lion tamer were laughing immoderately at them.  
 An examination of the damage having been made, they set to work getting the boat in repair again.  
 It was a wonder to all hands that the bursting bomb had not blown the boat to pieces.  
 Still, it had done enough damage to keep them busy several hours, and when they finally completed the work, the lights shone out again, and the power of the boat was regained.  
 Rising from the water, she landed on the shore, and remained there until the following day.  
 A search of the neighborhood was made, and our friends found the tracks of elephants some distance away.  
 While they were so engaged, Barney and Pomp found a good-sized chameleon and brought it back to the boat.  
 They had scarcely deposited the horrible brute in the cage when they were started by a tremendous trumpeting sound.  
 It was followed by a crackling of the twigs and bushes, and as the startled pair glanced around, they caught sight of an enormous elephant.  
 The monster had come plunging from the jungle, and was rushing straight toward the air-boat.  
 Barney imagined he was charging on the Rambler, and rushing into the pilot-house he started the screws.  
 The buzzing sound they made seemed to startle the beast.  
 It paused and fastened its vicious little eyes upon the machine as it shot in the air.  
 Up went the Rambler twenty-five feet.  
 Here Barney stopped her.  
 She hovered directly above the elephant.  
 "Pomp!" roared the Irishman.  
 "Hullo dar! Wha' yo' want?" replied the coon.  
 "Dhrop a bombshell on ther spalpeen."  
 "Am yo' gwine ter take her back in sections?"  
 "Troth it's no sich baste we kin git in ther cage."  
 "Whar am Marse Frank an' ole Shadrach?"  
 "Beyant in ther joongle hoidin', I fancy."  
 Pomp looked down at the elephant.  
 He had plunged into the muddy shore of the lake.  
 There he was pulling up the lotus leaves with his trunk.  
 Devouring some, he flung other tufts over his back, and then deliberately plastered himself with mud.  
 His object was to coat his hide with an armor against the flies and mosquitoes that were annoying him.  
 Ever and anon he glanced furtively at the singular air-ship floating above him, looking as if very suspicious of it.  
 Just then Frank and the lion tamer emerged from the jungle, and the elephant caught sight of them.  
 He raised his head, elevated his big ears, then made a sudden rush for them as if intent upon their destruction.  
 Mighty in his strength, and instinctively knowing they were enemies, the beast was bent upon killing them.  
 "Masther Frank!" roared Barney. "Shall we kill him?"  
 "No! No! We must capture him alive."  
 "Be heavens he'll assassinate yez."  
 "Leave him to us."

They calmly watched the elephant charging on them, and when he was coming full tilt, they retreated at a run.  
 Behind them was a mass of timber and twigs, dead leaves and other rubbish, covering a certain area of ground.  
 They ran over it.  
 In hot pursuit the elephant followed.  
 But scarcely was he well upon it, when there came a crash.  
 It was the covering of a pit fall some natives had prepared and the monster went down in the trap and disappeared.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE GIRAFFES.

FRANK and Shadrach had reached the opposite side of the pit-fall when the elephant crashed through, but while the lion tamer gained solid ground, the inventor fell in with the beast.  
 Half buried in a mass of timber Frank fell into the deep excavation and a quantity of the rubbish fell upon him.  
 The logs and stones struck and bruised him, and he was half stunned by the blows he received on the head.  
 He was finally aroused by the elephant.  
 Fortunately it was not injured, as is frequently the case when pit-falls are employed to capture them, and getting himself out of the rubbish he began to puff and trumpet loudly.  
 The mighty beast rushed around and around the pit in an effort to get out but failed to do so, as high walls surrounded him on all sides.  
 In making one of these circuits he passed over Frank.  
 The young inventor saw the mighty body looming above him, and expected every moment to feel the enormous feet come down and crush him.  
 Luckily he escaped it.  
 Rising to his feet he looked upward.  
 The pit was ten feet deep, and thinking he might get out of it by means of one of the tree trunks, he laid one from the bottom up against the side wall.  
 He then attempted to climb up.  
 Unfortunately the elephant saw him.  
 Probably attributing its present trouble to Frank it charged on him, and he just had time to drop from the pole when the brute struck it.  
 The pole was sent flying.  
 Had he been on it he would have been killed.  
 Just then the air-boat appeared above the pit fall.  
 "Masther Frank!" yelled Barney.  
 "Help me!" shouted the inventor.  
 "Catch this rope!"  
 A long, sinuous rope came down in the pit.  
 Frank grasped it.  
 The elephant rushed at him again.  
 Before it reached him Pomp sent the Rambler up in the air.  
 Frank was swiftly raised from the ground, and just as the elephant reached the spot where he had been he passed beyond its reach, and landed on the upper ground.  
 The air boat then descended.  
 A consultation ensued among the quartet.  
 It was deemed best to leave the monster where he was a few days, and starve him into docility.  
 "But suppose the fellows who made this pitfall return?" said Shadrach. "They will take him away."  
 "It looked to me like a very old trap?" Frank replied. "But if it is not abandoned, the ones who built it have the first privilege to take the brute."  
 "Specs yo' am right," said Pomp.  
 "D'yez mane ter shtay here till he's tame?" asked Barney.  
 "No," promptly replied Frank. "We can go scouring the country for the giraffes we were after."  
 They then boarded the Rambler.  
 She was sent up in the air.  
 Two days passed by without any of the animals they were after appearing in sight.  
 The machine floated toward a dense copse of woods toward night-fall, with Pomp at the wheel, when suddenly the coon startled his companions by yelling:  
 "Dar dey am—dar dey am!"  
 "What do you mean?" cried Frank, down below.  
 "Dar's fibe horses about twenty-fo' han's high chawin' de leaves offen some mimosa trees yander."  
 Frank hastened up-stairs from the supper table.  
 One glance out the window showed him a herd of the giraffes only a mile away.  
 Some were browsing the scant herbage, and others were plucking the choicest leaves from the trees with their long tongues, while one of them was lying down.  
 Not one of them measured less than fifteen feet from their heads to their front cloven hoofs.  
 They were of a reddish white color, marked by numerous dark, rusty spots, their enormous necks had short manes, the skulls were surmounted by short protuberances like horns, covered with skin and hair, and terminating in long, hard bristles.  
 As soon as the creatures saw the boat their natural timidity asserted itself, and they started to run away.  
 Instead of trying to get into the woods, where the Rambler could not have followed them, they sped away over the plains.



Their heads, poised at the top of their long necks, swayed back and forth as if they were lame.

Giraffes go faster than horses.

Yet they did not seem to exert themselves any.

The Rambler sped along after them.

An exciting chase then ensued, for the herd kept bunched, and momentarily increased their speed.

Along swept the flying machine, her two big driving wheels spinning furiously at the ends of the two shafts.

"Thunderation! How they can run!" admiringly cried the lion-tamer. "I never saw such speed before!"

"We are making thirty miles an hour," said Frank, as he glanced at the speed register.

"Faith, we're gainin' on 'em at that too," Barney added.

"How yo' gwine ter catch 'em?" asked Pomp.

"I'm going to get a pair of them with lassos."

Frank procured two lines with nooses in them as he spoke and handed one to Barney.

He then went out on deck with the Celt.

The speed of the Rambler was increased.

She swiftly forged up to the animals.

Frank had taken up a position on the starboard side, and the Irishman stood on the port side.

"I'll ring two av thim wid wat fling!" cried Barney.

"Lower the Rambler to within ten feet of the ground!" cried Frank.

"Yassah," answered the coon, doing as he was told.

Whirr! went Frank's line the next moment.

He missed the giraffe, and the Celt flung his lasso.

Barney was more fortunate.

His noose settled over the neck of one of the beasts.

Unluckily for him the giraffe started off at an angle, and gave the line a jerk that caused Barney to lose his balance.

A yell escaped the Irishman as he fell from the boat, but the next moment he landed on the giraffe's back, and flinging both arms around its neck, retained his position.

"Whoop!" he yelled; "I have him!"

The hind quarters of these animals are much lower than the fore, and if the Celt had not held on tenaciously, he would have slid off at its long tail.

Away dashed the giraffe bearing Barney off.

He got astride of its neck-base, and wrapping both arms around it, he maintained his position.

The lasso had fallen to the ground, and was then being trailed along after the flying animal.

Frank saw what happened.

He also observed that Barney was safe.

"Keep on after the others, Pomp!" he cried.

"But wha' yo' gwine ter do fo' Bahney?"

"He's all right. We'll attend to him afterward."

Frank gathered up his lasso, and let it fly again.

This time the loop fell over the animal's head.

The other end of the line was secured to the boat in a twinkling, and Frank sung out:

"Now, drop her to the ground!"

Down sunk the air boat, the screws and wheels stopping, and she landed upon her flanges.

The giraffe was brought to a sudden pause.

It backed up to the air boat and let its heels drive.

So fast were its kicks that the eye could not follow them.

They rattled against the metal hull of the Rambler in a tattoo not unlike the roll of a drum.

The animal plunged, raced around and made every effort to burst its bonds, but failed to succeed.

Armed with a short rope, Frank alighted with Shadrach.

Waiting until the giraffe had exhausted itself and lay down to rest they each took one end of the line and approached it.

Without much difficulty the rope was tied to its front and hind fetlocks so short that its stride was diminished.

That prevented its kicking.

Nor could it run.

In the meantime Barney had been carried on for considerable distance, and the three remaining giraffes escaped.

Getting accustomed to his novel position, Barney began to rather enjoy the ride he was getting.

"Begob, I'm a jockey!" he muttered. "It's wan av these bastes I'll tame, bring to Ameriky, an' inther in wan av ther races. I'd win ivery toime, an'—oh—h—h!"

The giraffe had stepped on the rope trailing from its neck.

It tripped itself.

Down it went with a crash.

Barney was sent flying through the air.

He landed on his forehead and gave it such a hard bump that he was deprived of his senses.

The rope had got caught in the split hoof of the giraffe, and the animal was unable to get it out.

It struggled furiously.

But all to no purpose.

It could not get up again.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### A VERY DANGEROUS BRUTE.

HAVING secured the giraffe to the air boat, Frank soon discovered how Barney had fared.

He tied up the Irishman's animal, revived Barney, and they then drove the beast over to the Rambler.

Here both giraffes were tied side by side so they could neither kick nor run away, after which a single halter was secured to their necks and tied to the boat.

She was started for the elephant pit.

Dragged unceremoniously after her, the giraffes were compelled to follow and they finally landed near the trap.

On the following morning the elephant was fed by Frank.

They remained there several days taming the big beast, and finally got it so that they could handle it fearlessly.

The one who built the pit had not come to claim it and they finally secured the beast as the giraffes were.

A slanted road bed was then laid down, and the elephant was led up out of the pit.

With such big game in tow, the journey back to Lagos was necessarily very slow, but they finally accomplished it.

They were glad to get rid of the big animals.

Nothing had been seen of the slavers' ship, and Sim Nixon was still confined in the animal cage.

To all his entreaties for liberation a deaf ear was turned.

The captain declared that he was going to carry him to America and put him in prison.

Most of the cages by this time were filled.

They now had but few more animals to capture, and a trip was made to the southward.

Here a porcupine, an onager, a dromedary and a civet cat were captured and brought back to the Black Bass.

On this trip Frank had seen a place where he thought he could secure a rhinoceros.

Accordingly, when he had left his last capture on the ship, they started the Rambler for the place.

It was in the French Congo State.

On the following day the air-ship reached the place.

It was near a marshy woodland.

The rhinoceros, despite the thickness of their hide, are greatly tormented by insects, and wallow in the mud of swamps to coat themselves with the mire as a protection like elephants.

It is said that the sight of a rhinoceros is sufficient to put a lion to flight, he easily kills elephants, man is the only enemy he fears, and this fear ceases when he is wounded or pursued.

They are at once treacherous and aggressive, and furious brutes, whom all resistance only renders the more implacable.

A tour of the place was made by the air-ship.

They had not proceeded far in this manner when a tremendous shouting in the voices of natives reached Frank's ears, and he glanced downward.

Beneath the Rambler he saw a score of negroes.

They were rushing in all directions through the woods with every appearance of the greatest alarm.

"What ails them, Shadrach?" asked the inventor.

"Shall I give them a hail?" replied the lion-tamer.

"By all means."

Shadrach hastened out on deck.

There he shouted down to the blacks.

They glanced up at the boat, and with their fear very much increased by the sight of it, accelerated their pace.

"They won't answer," said the lion-tamer in disgust.

"Why not?" queried the inventor.

"Because they're scared of the boat."

"Can't you see the cause of the alarm?"

"I see the saplings and bushes agitated."

"By what?"

"A rhinoceros. Here he comes."

"Now I see him. What a monster!"

"Lord! Ain't he mad at them!"

The brute they were looking at was one of the two horned species known as the Keitloa, one horn curving forward and the other backward.

These creatures are dreaded on account of their strength and ferocity by the native hunters.

Although usually slow in their movements, upon irritation they can run rapidly, their great weight and strength enabling them to easily force their way through dense jungles, breaking down small trees before their furious charges.

Frank now realized why the negroes were running.

He steered the air-boat after the animal to keep it in view.

"Shadrach, don't lose sight of it!" he called.

"All right; I'll tell you how to steer."

"Look how it rips up furrows in the ground with its horns."

"The coons have maddened him."

"I've lost him now—where is he?"

"Steer to the right more."

"Very well. Ah—there, I see him now."

The negroes had all climbed up the trees to get out of danger, and the rhinoceros rushed on.

Presently it reached a large clearing.

Here it came to a pause with its nose turned to the wind to scent the negroes, as the brutes have a keen sense of smell.

In the middle of the clearing stood a tree.

As soon as Frank saw the tree, he said:

"I'm going to capture that brute single handed."

"Thunderation, I don't see how you can do it!" said the lion-tamer, in skeptical tones.



"Oh, I've heard how the natives do the game. I'll fix him so he will be as helpless as a kitten."

"Don't you need any help from us?"

"Only to escape."

"What are we to do?"

"Let down a rope close to that tree."

"Well?"

"When I run for the line and grasp it send the Rambler up."

"Very well. We'll keep our rifles handy in case of accidents too."

"That's a wise plan. If you have to use them employ only the explosive bullets. Lead balls flatten against the tough hide of these monsters, and hunters, therefore, only employ tin or iron bullets when they try to kill them."

"Where are you going to alight?"

"Right here."

Shadrach lowered the flying machine.

Armed with only his revolvers, Frank debarked behind the wild beast and the Rambler was sent toward the tree.

There she paused.

A long line was let down.

From where he was Frank was not seen.

The rhinoceros only turned its head occasionally to look back for danger from the rear.

Going down flat on his face, the young inventor made tracks for the lone tree by crawling.

It occupied considerable time to get between the rhinoceros and the tree, but he finally accomplished the task.

His friends, all armed, and standing on the deck of the Rambler, were intently watching his movements.

Gaining the desired point, Frank arose.

He then fired his pistol at the beast.

The ball inflicted a painful wound.

A cry escaped the rhinoceros, it wheeled around, and seeing the inventor, it pawed at the ground, lowered its head, and made a sudden rush for him.

The brute was mad with fury.

It designed to gore him.

Frank observed its plan.

He rushed for the tree.

On came the beast furiously.

A wild race followed.

Straight for the tree fled Frank.

The rhinoceros did not deviate an inch.

It plunged on after him, and quickly overhauled Frank.

By the time he reached the tree it was within three feet of him.

He grasped the rope.

Instead of the boat going up and raising him out of danger it moved ahead, and slammed him against the tree.

Pomp had in the sudden excitement pulled the wrong lever.

Instead of moving the one controlling the screws, he turned the lever that started the driving wheels.

Frank would have been torn to pieces had he not suddenly swung up his legs on the rope.

Mistaking the tree trunk for him, as the inventor originally intended it should, the rhinoceros aimed a terrific blow at it.

The horn on its face was driven deeply into the tree.

It remained fastened there.

The rhinoceros was caught.

It could not tear its horn free.

Frank dropped to the ground again.

The air-boat passed on.

"Come down here!" he shouted.

It made him angry because his friends had not done as he wished, and he glanced up at the boat.

As he did so he observed a large, sinuous body leap from the foliage of the tree.

The beast landed on the back of the rhinoceros.

"A leopard!" gasped Frank, in surprise.

The cat-like beast had been lying hidden on a branch of the tree and was in a furious mood to all appearance.

Frank raised his pistol to fire at it.

This was no sooner done when, with a most horrible, blood-curdling yell, the beast sprang for him.

He felt its claws pierce his flesh and the next moment was knocked flat on his back, the beast on top of him.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### CONCLUSION.

THE leopard that sprang at Frank was a large, graceful creature, with a slender form of yellowish color, covered with spots composed of six smaller spots, and was a most ferocious animal.

A demoniacal caterwall ripped from its gaping red mouth as it struck against Frank's body, and it was just about to bury its sharp teeth in him when he shot up at it.

The ball struck its leg.

A wound was inflicted that made the beast bound in the air.

Down it came with a thud, and landing near the young inventor it rolled on the grass, screaming at the dirt in a vicious manner, and fairly screamed.

Frank arose.

He was scratched and torn.

But he saw that the animal was lamed and at his mercy.

"That's the last beast we need," he muttered.

The Rambler was then coming down, and the rhinoceros had given up struggling, for it could not dislodge its horn from the tree trunk.

In a few moments the air-ship reached the ground.

"Secure that leopard in a bag!" he cried.

Barney and Pomp procured a huge canvas sack, and holding open the mouth they scooped up the leopard.

They then carried it aboard the Rambler and put it in a cage.

Released of the sack, the animal sprang at the bars to reach them, but was foiled of getting out.

Then the coon and the Irishman returned to Frank.

Shadrach had explained how Pomp made the error that nearly cost the inventor's life.

Frank then dressed his wounds.

This done they shackled the legs of the rhinoceros, and with an ax cut the tree away from its horn.

The savage beast was utterly helpless.

Our friends then began to devise a means of getting him on the ship, as he was too heavy to carry on the Rambler.

He was so savage that it was evident they could not drag him along, so it was finally decided to send the air boat to the Black Bess, and have her come down the coast.

She could pause at a point opposite that where the animal was, and the sailors could come ashore and drive the brute to the ship, with the assistance of Frank's friends.

Barney and Pomp were accordingly sent off with the Rambler.

They made the journey in safety, put the leopard aboard, and then returned to Frank and Shadrach.

The air boat was landed near the captive beast.

Here they remained for three days guarding it.

Then the sailors made their appearance, and said that the ship had been brought to the indicated place.

They arranged the rhinoceros with ropes and poles so they could handle him, and finally got him to the ship.

He was safely stowed on board.

The air-boat had followed them and landed on shore.

All hands then boarded the Black Bess and saw the thirty kinds of beasts they had captured, most of them being pairs.

They were all confined in pens and cages between decks, the giraffes being placed under the open main hatch so their long necks would not be cramped.

A large cargo of food was taken aboard, and the ship was made ready for her homeward voyage.

Sim Nixon was safely caged up yet and swore furiously at Frank and his friends when he saw them.

Then the two crews parted.

The Black Bess put out to sea with her cargo of wild beasts, and the inventor and his companions went back aboard the Rambler and overhauled her.

She was prepared for her long trip across the ocean.

In two days they had her ready.

She then shot up into the air.

At a height of one mile she paused and then glided away.

Although the four friends had suffered many hardships and privations, they were delighted with the success of the journey.

It had been perilous sport they were engaged at, but it was just such amusement as they liked.

Barney got out his fiddle, and Pomp his banjo.

As they sailed away over the ocean, the Irishman and the coon struck up a lively tune, and the clouds echoed back the strains of a jolly song they sung.

Several days passed by uneventfully.

They kept an even distance above the sea, and sometimes floated with the wind, and at other times fought it.

But the gallant Rambler steadily held her course.

She worked as well as any invention Frank had ever patented, and he was very much pleased with her performance.

In due course of time the shores of America hove in view, and the boat headed across the land toward Readestown.

On the eighth day a terrific cyclone came up.

The light faded and a dull gloom settled on the earth.

It was difficult for Frank to see where he was going, and he started the search-light.

He then made an effort to get out of the furious gale by raising the air boat above the storm.

This had scarcely been attempted when there sounded a most terrible crash at the bow.

They had been plunging toward the mountains.

A steep, rocky cliff had suddenly appeared before them, and although the young inventor first tried to turn the boat, and then stopped the wheels, the appalling wind caught her and slammed her into the rocks.

A grinding crash followed.

The bow was stove in and the rudder demolished.

The shock knocked every one down, and a scene of excitement followed, when it was seen that the Rambler was rapidly sinking down into a chasm.

Frank saw that the machinery was injured.

He made an effort to stop her descent, but failed.

"All hands on deck for your lives!" he shrieked.

Out rushed every one.

The boat struck a ledge with a mighty crash.

As she was toppling from the edge, Shadrach yelled:

"Jump! Jump!"

The four sprang on the ledge.



They were none too quick.  
Down plunged the air-boat to its destruction.  
They heard a grinding and splitting far down below, and knew that she had struck the rocks with great force.  
It was raining and blowing, and very dark where they were, but there was no shelter for them.

They remained where they were all night in the utmost discomfort, and unable to get any sleep.

With the break of day the storm passed away.

It was then seen that the ledge sloped down into a deep ravine several hundred feet below them.

They went down to look for the Rambler.

She was found.

Smashed to fragments.

There was nothing left of her.

Barney and Pomp saved their musical instruments.

A feeling of sadness overwhelmed Frank when he beheld the wreck of the gallant air-boat.

She could never again be of service to him.

"But she did her duty nobly!" he remarked.

"Can't she be repaired?" asked Shadrach.

"Begob, there isn't enough av her left ter do anything!" said Barney.

"It am de stranges' t'ing dot mos' eberyfing yo' invent done git bruck somehow," said Pomp.

"If they hadn't met with accident," replied the inventor, "I would have an enormous collection of them at home now."

"How are we to reach Readestown from here?" asked Shadrach.

No one knew just where they were, but Barney suggested a walk to find out, and they tried the plan.

Leaving the ravine and crossing the country they finally reached a small village at which a railroad stopped.

Here they located themselves, and were overjoyed to learn that the cars ran from there to Readestown.

Waiting for the next train, they boarded it, and in due time they reached home.

Here they took a good rest.

The circus was then out west, but was expected in Boston on the following month, and they telegraphed Barnum the news, and waited for the show to return.

When the circus reached Boston, the ship Black Bess with her cargo of wild beasts came in.

Frank and his friends met them there.

The animals were put in possession of Mr. Barnum and Sim Nixon was put in jail.

Here he was prosecuted for trying to destroy the Rambler and for piracy against the Black Bess.

He was sentenced to a long term in prison.

Frank received the money the veteran showman offered and gave Shadrach a quarter of it. The total sum was \$50,000.

Barney and Pomp each received their share.

Although Shadrach was well off, he liked his business so well and had such a magnificent pair of lions to perform with he parted with Frank and traveled off with the circus again.

The young inventor took his share of the money to build another contrivance of a wonderful nature which soon occurred to him.

It was destined to be a marvelous invention and the three friends set to work at building it.

The use they put it to will be shown our readers in the next volume of this library, and we can safely promise you it will be a most interesting story.

[THE END.]

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